



Owen A. Hill, Jr.

Oct. 26, 1915.

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PS 3515 .I5 I4 1915

**Hill, Owen Aloysius, 1863-1930.**

An idyl, some sermons and a song



**AN IDYL, SOME SERMONS  
AND A SONG**



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AN IDYL  
SOME SERMONS  
AND  
A SONG

BY  
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PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR  
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY  
1915

9515  
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1915

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**JOANNES CARDINALIS FARLEY,**

*Archiepiscopus Neo-Eboracensis.*

**NEO-EBORACI,**

**die 8 Septembris, 1915**



TO • HER  
WHO • GAVE • ME  
NEXT • PLACE • TO • GOD  
IN • HER • THOUGHTS  
MY • MOTHER



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**AN IDYL, SOME SERMONS  
AND A SONG**



## Alexis and Mercedes

Deep in the tangled growth of world-old oaks,  
Where twigs, that ages erst untrodden lay,  
Crackled and smote his soul with lonesome songs;  
Beside a spring, that rippled praise to God  
The third morn of the universe's birth,  
Nor ever yet had broke thanksgiving's hymn,  
Alexis watched the twilight streak the west,  
And raise red riot in a leaden sky  
With arrow beams of an uneasy sun  
Just setting on the hermit's thirtieth year.  
There is a melancholy in the death  
Of each departing day, that presses light  
The myriad hearts of men, for that they see,  
Or think they see, at eve the morrow's east  
Dance with the splendor of the risen king,  
Who slept against the night. Not so the sick,  
Who scarce can hope five heavy breaths to draw.  
These dread the dark, impatient cry the dawn,  
To travel to the land of mystery,  
Their path lit by the lamp God set in Heaven.  
For death, like other beasts men reckon foes,

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Assumes an aspect void of half his dread,  
When, stripped of night time's terror by the light,  
He bares his whole complexion to their gaze,  
And loud proclaims his powerlessness to harm.  
Not so the monk, who knows his heart-roots smit,  
And sits him down some eve to watch calm peace  
Settle upon the head of what should be  
The herald of those ten kind years, that fleck  
The gold of youth with iron gray of prime.  
Should be; but, lo! by pious exercise  
And healthful draughts of prayer, her fount of youth,  
His soul has fast outgrown the clayey gyves  
Of gaoler body, and contemplates flight  
To climes more genial than this murky home.  
From out his eyes Alexis never cleared  
The kindly dreadful image on them spread  
What time they rose no higher than the ground,  
Or swept a lower plane where God walked not.  
Mayhap, nay surely, Heaven worked its will,  
And let the rebel prince inviting snares  
On his horizon cast, to win him back,  
Or fright him to the Saviour's open side,  
The gateway to God's heart. So drives the storm  
A too bold fledgling to its mother's wing.  
Because it marked an epoch in his life,  
This day was with such shadows overcast.  
For epoch-days our dull remembrance whet,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

And vivify the dust, we thought as dead  
As whom Elisha's bones of old made quick.  
He watched the glow-worm glimmer in the grass  
From early morn. He mourned another life,  
When that the angry sun, descending hot,  
O'erwhelmed with blinding gloom her lesser light.  
Then all day long sat near the singing spring,  
His fingers in his hair, or veil-wise held  
Between him and the glare of saucy rays,  
That peered anon into his swimming eyes.  
Nigh blinded by the burning penance drops,  
That worked a sadder havoc in his sight  
Than rounded circle of a hundred years,  
He looked before, behind, to right and left;  
Like Moses, high above the vales of Moab,  
On Nebo's summit, dashing back the tears,  
That dimmed the outlines of his soul's desire,  
The Promised Land, his follies forfeited.  
He thought him of the dream he fashioned once,  
To treasure in his fancy double locked,  
Till grace broke through, and tore to mocking shreds  
The mimic idol of his heart's young love.

Some twenty years ago his father's home  
Lay at the head of cedar avenues,  
That wound through level sweeps of clover heads  
And shafted timothy, field flowers between.

*Alexis and Mercedes*

There life was love, and love derived its life  
From amorous breezes of his garden South.  
The pebbles and the shells in miniature,  
With nice precision o'er the driveway spread,  
Full oft reëchoed noise of carriage wheels;  
And rolled this way and that, as rolled they once,  
When pavement for the shouting waves at play  
On shore of distant sea. Then he, the heir  
Of teeming acres, stood upon the porch,  
Ornate with columns carved in classic Greece.  
These more became a thousandfold this shrine,  
To kindlier worship of way-weary guest,  
And cult of age-old friendships dedicate,  
Than temple of the goddess, noisome proud  
And marble hearted, that they guarded once.  
He stood, and welcomed with a tell-tale smile,  
Pursuant of love's roses in his cheeks,  
A mother and her daughter, beauty's queens.  
As fair the mother as when braids of hair,  
Now tied in sober knot of matronhood,  
Caressed her shoulders, like the laughing light  
Of golden tresses, barring robber eyes  
From sacrilegious theft of treasures hid  
Beneath the daughter's wealth of waving curls.  
One age were they, the heir of Evergreen  
And this sweet scion of a godly pair,  
That lived to keep the lamp of faith clean trimmed.



## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Their neighbors, all forgetful of the hand  
That sprinkled thick Virginia's sacred soil  
With gifts as rare as favored Eden knew,  
The holy flame let flicker first, and die.  
It lit their braver fathers to the rack,  
It mocked the brands of countrymen misled,  
And made men valiant martyrs to the truth.  
We never cling so close to cherished goods,  
As when anear the cavalcade of dearth;  
We never covet breath so tight amain,  
Or hug our heart to make it bind and loose  
The crimson stream of life, as when beside  
The sable casket, that imprisons fast  
What yesterday familiar laughed and talked,  
A silent clod to-day, except for sounds  
That leap to us across death's vaporous chasm.  
And so the Sissons, conscious of what wealth  
The nearer smile of God communicates  
To them that pledge and keep their troth with Him,  
Had held the priceless jewel of their faith.  
They pitied misers who for paltry gain,  
Or friendships prompted by the petty sneers  
Of addle-heads for high observances,  
Went out from fold, that God had hedged about,  
To tents of sin and devils' synagogues.  
They scourged these cringing paupers, slaves to sense,  
With bitter memories of what halcyon days

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Had taken wing that winter long ago,  
When faith, the message-bird from earth to Heaven,  
Took flight, and never after sped return,  
Interstices to fill with melody.  
The daughter borrowed from her mother's grace  
A superhuman beauty, that perforce  
Had dragged a world to worship at its feet,  
If pillared on the universe's height.  
The bluff old features of her father's face,  
As sweetly open as the broadening fields,  
Impressions left where all too rounded lines  
Had wrought a work with over-niceness spoilt.  
E'en yet the gray-haired squires and solemn wigs  
In all the county reminiscent fell,  
To talk of gentle Amy's love for Hugh,  
When that the church bells wedding carols rang,  
When roads were noisy with the whir of wheels,  
And sound of servants journeying to and fro,  
Intent on welding some two hearts to one.  
Old men remembered how they thought it base  
And worse than sacrilege, to steal away  
One glance from eyes they almost coveted,  
Whose limpid depths they knew belonged to Hugh.  
And matrons, staidier now than then, recalled  
With what decorum they half hid their smiles,  
When etiquette or function of the hour  
Forced them to linger close to Amy's shrine.

*Alexis and Mercedes*

When last the man, who pushed God's interests  
Among the believing few that clave to God,  
Had, reënacting Cana, blest with wine  
Of Heaven's benediction other two,  
As favored as the trusting hosts of eld,  
Who rested Christ that day He took farewell  
Of Mary's roof, to walk three years to death,  
Their neighbors welled the sigh relief exacts.  
Like him, who once, because his will was right,  
Fought fast the demon greed, that pinched him hard  
To lay his fingers on a brother's wealth,  
And blessed the hap that drove him seas across,  
And rooted up temptation by the roots.  
E'en so, when sacramental rite had made  
Him hers and her irrevocably his,  
They who half dreaded their own weaker selves,  
And looked about, not knowing when they'd steal,  
Breathed easier, and were winners by their loss.  
Full soon a boy, whose every lineament,  
Close-curved hair, and chin, and flashing eyes,  
Bespoke the soldier, prattled evenings through.  
And then another, whose uncertain health  
Endeared him to the mother; for her love  
Could waste itself with lavish largess-care,  
And still excuses find for saying nay  
To nature's clamor 'gainst unceasing wrongs.  
A girl came next, and then another boy.

*Alexis and Mercedes*

These two scarce lived to lisp infantile thanks  
To parent benefactors, who had nursed  
Them unto God, and sealed their fronts with sign,  
At which the golden gates of Heaven roll back,  
To let the favored pilgrim into rest.  
Two little mounds without the doorway stood,  
Within the acre, sacred to the dead,  
Engirdled round by walls of rough-hewn rock.  
The mother called them stepping-stones to peace:  
So close she felt, when kneeling there in prayer,  
To bliss eternal and God's nearer smile.  
Our hearts are fashioned out of many strings,  
So well attuned each echoes unto each,  
To mercifully fill all aching voids;  
And every life is one unbroken song.  
Religion's fairy hands roam though the chords,  
And strive to stay the mad and angry sweeps  
Of headlong passion. When at times some strand,  
Too worn to meet the pressure death exerts,  
Asunder snaps, and leaves a gap too wide,  
She seldom mends the string. 'Twere wrong to rob  
The soul of memories, dearer thus than whole.  
She merely modulates the remnant threads,  
And, like the tone of sad-tongued kettle-drum,  
Moans to the rest, and harmonizes all.  
And so religion was at work within  
This father's and this mother's smitten hearts,

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

From winter morn they moved aside the snow,  
To hide their sacrifice against the time,  
When God, the universal reckoner,  
To each restores his own and gifts besides.  
But lo! her task was scarce begun, when woes,  
More dismal than their predecessors grim,  
Sore tried her patience, and nigh dashed her hopes.  
For war had left its furrows in the land,  
And once a bearded demon from the North  
Had swaggered past at head of straggler thieves,  
On booty more than manly battle bent;  
Confounding greed with sacred valor's cause,  
And war with pillage. From her suppliant hands  
He tore the mother's son. Ten years of care,  
So sedulous it tempered errant winds,  
And bent descending suns to harmlessness,  
Had reared in either cheek the rose of health,  
And litheness poured into his rounded limbs,  
Which, were it not enwrought by slow degrees  
Of time, had surely been miraculous.  
He stole the boy, and left disconsolate  
Two hearts, that never wronged a kindred heart.  
He made the pathway rough and dark for feet  
That stepped one side to let a beetle live.  
The while they lightened grief with comfort tears,  
Their soldier lad, with all the fervid heats  
Of fifteen summers in his tingling blood,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Tore from beneath the painted warrior frown  
Of ancestor, who helped at Yorktown drive  
The British from our shores, an arquebuse.  
This brown with rust, and silent now for years,  
He took, and strapped it with precision nice  
To shoulders, all unused to heavier weight  
Than gentle lying mother's hands at eve,  
When, ere she tucked the corners of his cot,  
She stooped to press upon his thirsty cheek  
A kiss, the harbinger of angel dreams.  
Accoutred thus, he scorned the wooden gun  
With which, on holidays this way and that  
Among log-jointed cabin homes of slaves,  
He led to mimic war mock solemn ranks  
Of grinning darkey boys. Then, unawares,  
Slipped past the room of grief through fields aglint  
With furtive beams of rising harvest-moon.  
He reached the ford, where scouting men in gray  
Lay close, to dog the heels of them that sacked  
And plundered, worse, and violated homes  
Without defenders, save weak women and white hairs,  
Secure defence in days when lances rode  
Abroad, to let the angry light consume  
What churls dared ladyhood or age insult.  
These hailed the lad aloud, with cheery shout;  
And one, the captain of the rest, half thought  
He saw the babe he left long years ago,



*Alexis and Mercedes*

Astride the knee of her he loved as life,  
But less than tearful country. Off each cheek  
He dried the damp night-dews, and wrapped him warm  
In folds of army blanket. First, he pieced  
The boy's unwilling story, ere he slept.  
With voice as winning as he could command,  
He prayed him home return, and spare his life  
To parents, who would certain fall and die,  
Bereft of every prop to lean upon.  
Vainly the captain spoke. Sleep seized the boy,  
And sundered quite the broken speech he wove,  
"I want my Harold, want to rescue him,  
And fight the ugly brutes, that——" Here he ceased.  
All through the night by turns he talked and strove,  
And wildly tossed his arms, as who in sleep  
Beats off a hundred foes, that seek his life  
With eyes of fire and hornéd hands of beasts.  
The night had nearly run its course,  
And ready made to greet from western heights  
Pursuant dawn. The twain, preoccupied  
With grievous bodings of the young boy's fate,  
Had noted not the elder's going out.  
Till last the mother, roused from lethargy,  
Let fall the tear-wet hand she held in hers,  
And made as if to climb the nursery stair,  
To summon him she thought secure in sleep.  
Then spoke the father, "Nay, let him enjoy

Oblivion's mercy. Would we, too, could seal  
Our eyes to things of sense, till Harold came.  
For waking ill becomes the nights ahead  
And days, whose gloom meridian sun  
As little pierces as the waning moon  
A storm-swept sky. Come, rest you yet a while.  
'Twill soon be morn. Mayhap kind nature's hand,  
When through the window of his room she steals,  
And bids him grapple with a sorrow new,  
Will not so rudely shock the boy we love."  
Then she obeying knelt beside her spouse.  
And on the woman's sobs, the man's firm prayer,  
A deeper stillness fell; till God walked in,  
Unseen but felt, and vigil kept with them.  
At length the longed for light strode through the room.  
They strained their ears to catch the noise o'erhead  
Of pattering naked feet; but listed vain.  
No footfall answered echoes of their hearts.  
The hall was still. Instead, they heard the roar  
Of musketry without, and guessed the worst.  
For when the dawn made foes discernible,  
The coward caitiffs wheeled about, and sharp  
Upon the scattered sentries at the ford  
Poured leaden death. Then helter-skelter ran,  
At sound of martial music braying near.  
The mother with a start dashed back her tears,  
And hurried straight to chamber damask-hung,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

That hideous grief had never yet profaned.  
Then swooned as dead upon the couch.  
O God, thy ways are strange, and faith alone  
Can trace among the sands of desert sorrow  
The passage of thy blood-empurpled feet.  
But dimly; for the torch of faith, though strong  
And penetrating as a hundred suns,  
Is darkness to enfleshéd mind of man.  
So midday splendor blinds the bird of night.  
And from fulfilment faith is farther off  
Than distant hope, who patient stands between  
Her sister and love's pinnacle, where men  
Can see, enjoy, and taste how sweet God is.  
We pardon then, and trust that Heaven looks light  
Upon such momentary fits of doubt  
As robbed this stricken parent of her limbs,  
And smote her weak as smites despair the fool,  
For whom no God save idolled self exists.  
Hers was a rude awakening in sooth.  
The smoke and powder-weighted mist of war  
Had hardly lifted from the face of morn,  
When up the hill, and from the water's edge,  
Four men, detailed as guard funereal,  
With studied firmness, that the death spell lends  
To over-weakened bodies, stood without.  
These bade the master forth to claim his dead.  
They told with sobs how in the jaws of death

*Alexis and Mercedes*

The fondly brave young lad from cover rushed  
Toward Harold, whom he saw far off and hailed.  
But straight a Minié ball crashed through his heart.  
The arquebuse and straps fell at his feet.  
He backward tossed and grasped the piece in death.  
Then came a lull. The tide of victory turned,  
And veterans knelt to catch youth's dying words.  
But so unused their ears to aught save oaths  
And ribald of the camp, they little kept.  
One only man, with some remembrance left  
Of priest, who stroked his raven locks when young,  
Had noted sharp the prayer. So much, alas!  
It minded him of grace's earlier hours,  
When angel keeper folded 'round him wings,  
And leaned betimes to hear him lisp the same.  
"Death came," he said, "while yet his eyes were fixed  
Upon a medal fluttering at his breast;  
And life went out with pity hand in hand.  
The soul and body, ere they parted quite,  
Came crowding to his lips, and framed the words,  
'My Jesus, mercy!' Peace more sweet be his,  
Than all the sorrow-honeyed thoughts, he woke  
Within sin-stained me! And boys, to-night  
Mark Murphy travels back to where he met  
The monster of his life, and strayed with wrong  
Into the woods that skirt the narrow path."  
Nor ever yet died saint, but that some heart,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Buried in sin, was resurrected whole;  
The one true miracle of life in death.  
Jump with the word he swore Mark Murphy turned,  
And ever after welcomed on his knees  
Approaching dawn, and kneeling took farewell  
Of days rich freighted with the balm of Heaven.  
Then, when with Lee he laid his musket down  
And journeyed home with scars and worshipped rags,  
He beat the demon out, to make his heart  
A wayside shrine for God and holy thoughts.  
And after, year by year, as pilgrim lone,  
On each recurrent anniversary,  
He bolted tight the jarring wheels of trade,  
And bent his steps to where the mounded turf  
Concealed the relics of his patron saint,  
The boy in gray, whose going out had marked  
A crisis era in his upward path.  
Devotions duly paid, he always stooped  
To kiss again the coffin-lid of clay,  
Arrange the flowers, and cross the stars and bars  
Of humbled battle flag, appealing still  
To a hurt people's pride. Ere bivouac drum  
Announced the close of day, and bade tired limbs  
Provision make on slumbrous tufts of grass  
Against fatigue, an army clomb the hill,  
And paid him honors due the dead of war.  
Virginia drooped her flags, camp-wrinkled cheeks,

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

When on the morrow word to march was passed,  
With sorrow's tribute glistened in the sun.

Another scene was done. The father's mind,  
A prey to thoughts conflictive, hardly knew  
Whether to weep the double loss, that snapped  
Whatever links had bound him to his kind,  
Or open wide his soul to motions proudly glad,  
Bestirred by halo, settled on the head  
Of his own flesh and blood, asleep with fame.  
At length agreed to nurse a precious grief,  
And patient bide the time when conscious God  
Would dry his eyes, and lead in smiling peace.  
The mother, all too frail to stem the tide  
Of anguish flood, wept copious tears the while.  
Till after-comfort, lured by earnest prayer,  
Assuaged her grief, and blunted quite the edge  
Of tearing doubt, that ever as a thorn  
Kept pricking sharp her quivering heart.  
Entombed within, the wanderer, dead or quick,  
She knew not, lay. And haply angel gleams  
Of her boy saint pierced through the mist of morns,  
The dews of eve, knelt at her soldier's grave,  
And poured around rays of consoling hope.  
Thus matters stood for nigh three heavy years.  
Far in the North with files interminate  
The streets were choked. The surging air was rent



*Alexis and Mercedes*

With loud huzzas, the thanks a grateful people paid  
To dust-stained veterans, homeward bent at last,  
With victory in their hands, and in their breasts  
A longing for the hearths, that years ago  
They turned their backs upon. My queen, the South,  
Saw other scenes; and all the war-swept land  
Below Potomac's nether bank was still.  
Men in whose souls were burned the featured pangs  
Of helpless courage, resident in mien  
Of their heart-broken chief that day he leaned  
Upon his sword to nod the ranks farewell,  
Gleaned sad behind the greedy scythes of war,  
And strove to plenty resurrect from death.  
And ever, as they reaped or ploughed, they hummed  
What broken echoes came to them across  
The trampled waste from bivouac hush or fight,  
The songs that late as this exert a spell  
Upon the blood within their grandsons' veins.  
Or halloed at the steeds, that prouder stepped  
And higher held their heads, where trumpets blared  
And cannon smote the hills about death-glens.  
At fall of day each told the furrows home,  
To taste again the humble fare, prepared  
By her soft hands, whose dainty touch had ne'er  
Ensweetened meal, partaken of in camp.  
Then on the open porch, above the rose,  
The berry bush, and stunted sassafras,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

They talked night's morning through. She mostly heard.

For pools of blood and gaping wounds, through which  
The messenger of fate steals in and out,  
Will long as time attentive pity claim  
From tender woman's soul. And ages link  
For mystic reasons, hid from student thought  
But open secrets to the unreasoning heart,  
The timid fair with rough, bewhiskered brave.  
And Lee, who led to death half of their life,  
Remains a benediction on the lips  
Of loyal women in the widowed South;  
Their king of men, so strong he hardly lost  
Where might omnipotent alone could win;  
So lionlike he bared his front to odds  
That stifled hope in less courageous breasts.  
Thus fared their neighbors round. The Sissons felt  
Remembrance of the lost boy and the dead  
Fade into wheeling depths of misty gloom,  
Where sorrow executes herself at last,  
And joy springs from her dust. Time worked its will,  
And God in kindness stooped to heal the wounds  
Love made, to let a higher love flow in.  
Mercedes came in answer to their prayers,  
What time approaching age forbade them hope.  
The light within her liquid eyes that fed  
The rose beneath, as summer sun and dew,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Bespoke the Maker's pleasure. Year and year  
Developed traits, some hidden hints of which  
The dormant hours of babyhood betrayed.  
Till all the graces of ten summers' growth  
Conspired to mould a being, so far removed  
From things that loiter in this vestibule  
Between the sin-made hell of ugliness  
And beauty's realms, the birthright once of man,  
That death, at loss to spell the branded curse  
Of primal fall, might hesitate to touch.  
Such was Mercedes, when she first began  
To visit Evergreen, Alexis' home,  
Set at the head of cedar avenues;  
And he the heir to all the wide estate,  
To boyhood what his only comrade was  
To lovely girlhood, waved a welcome smile,  
And trembling, ushered past the swinging doors  
This woman fair, this daughter fairer still.  
The while their mothers on the ivied porch,  
Beneath the coolness, wore the morning out  
With talk of this, and that, and neighbor chat,  
Their younger selves upon the moss-soft grass,  
That carpeted the lawn, disported glad.  
They lent the perfume of their voices, sweet  
With honeyed innocence, to vagrant airs;  
Or sat, and with mock soberness of age  
Confided hopes hid in the folds of time;

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Hopes free as Paradise from fear, and rimmed  
Around with lustre from the halo-light,  
Their guardian angels must have fingered oft,  
When both lay wrapped in solitude and sleep.  
Anon they wandered farther, past the edge  
Of meadow, skirted with the shadows, cast  
By leafage clinging to the forest oaks,  
Pausing a while to nosegays each for each  
Pluck from the tufted stalks of daisy bloom.  
So close their heads together row on row,  
These seemed a pathway for the butterflies,  
Too tired to cleave the pollen-freighted air;  
Or cherubs eyed and winged, to peer across  
The battlement of Heaven. Within the wood  
They made descent on towns of violets.  
Emerged again from dark and damp, their hands  
All teeming with the levied tax of war,  
They played at win and lose. They hardly guessed,  
As purple head on head beneath each tug,  
Sportively vicious, tumbled to the grass  
From linked stems, that, win or lose, each won  
Invariably the wish contended for.  
Then sudden came the mother's hurried call,  
To summon home the girl, forgetful quite  
That time's too rapid wing in noiseless flight  
Keeps pace with rounded orbs, which worlds away  
Wheel at a rate so reeling quick that minds

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Grow tired to think of it. Once, only once,  
They lingered till the echoes lost themselves  
Deep in the wooded alleys. Where they stood,  
In patch of intermingled light and shade,  
He stooped to cull a lonely buttercup;  
And trembling at his bravery, did a thing  
He never after dared. For smoothing back  
Her wayward wealth of curls, with t'other hand  
He held the flower within the magic round  
Of her sweet breath, and watched the golden sun  
Its petals kissed upon her dimpled chin.

So sped the days. And each returning year  
Had these for playmates, till a sterner sense  
Of duty stirred within their parents' breasts,  
And roused their sleeping wits to serious thought  
Of the dull dearth, from which two growing minds  
Must needs provision make for jousts ahead.  
For learning is the lance that wins fair fame,  
And contact with the oddities of life  
Is wizard strength that nerves the glaivéd hand.  
In spite of pain, attendant on the loss  
Of light at home their going out entailed,  
In council 'twas agreed to send them North,  
To where twin temples, dedicate to God  
And higher education, crowned the tops  
Of neighboring hills. Their years were now fifteen,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

And swords of flame had hitherto kept guard  
At entrance to the Eden where they played,  
And let no serpent in. Nor ever yet  
Did sin across the grass they romped upon  
Drag its slow length of slime. A vision they,  
That somewhere in a lifetime sweeps the path  
Of men surrendered to their baser selves,  
A grace to lift sin's slaves from servitude;  
In mien and favor like the splendid sight  
Some guardian angel, seated at the crib  
Of slumbering infant, sees in spirit dreams.  
And so they journeyed from the little world,  
That bounded all their knowledge, past the marts  
Of avaricious trade, and often walked  
Within a stone's throw of the shambles dread,  
Where souls immortal fell down dead for gain.  
At length, their travels at an end, they said  
Their last farewells beneath the ivy arch  
That spanned the gateway to the college grounds.  
Then went their different ways, to meet again  
When summer back returned let loose the hives  
Of hearts, athirst for flowery fields at home.  
These spells of rest, wedged in between the months  
Of dreary work, were always welcomest,  
Because renewals of the peaceful time,  
When all the year was one long holiday,  
And idle thinking was their single task.



*Alexis and Mercedes*

Insensibly a change their manners touched.  
The lawn was laid with grasses still as green  
As when they chased each other to and fro,  
The birds abush rehearsed the same sweet songs;  
And yet, somehow, they hated to confess,  
Their eyes were other, when they chanced to meet.  
A coy demureness had succeeded to  
What old-time candor laughed beneath the lids;  
Emotions close akin to harsh restraint  
Possessed them when they ventured to converse;  
They dealt out piece by piece the golden store  
Of coin mind-minted; yea, and miser like,  
They hid away some thoughts, and secrets had.  
But being children, they could ill explain  
The why and wherefore of the mystery.  
At times they fancied quite that body-growth  
Worked revolutions in the mind and sense.  
They never dreamed, till some three summers thence,  
When wiser with a wisdom poisoning worlds,  
And riper in experience bitter-sweet,  
That what had first from out their younger hearts  
A crystal spring of friendship welled and flowed,  
Was eddying past mad passion's muddy tide,  
And settling towards the sea of creature-love,  
Where some are saved and other some go down.  
It is God's way to record keep in Heaven  
Of short-lived minutes youth or age devotes

*Alexis and Mercedes*

To irksome virtue and His half-sweet yoke,  
That needs must gall the neck of nature some.  
On neighbor page He marks what debts of grace  
He owes in mercy slaves, who owe Him all.  
And when their needs are greatest, doles them out  
Reserve strength, won in fights full easily fought.  
Small wonder then that he and she sailed on  
Oblivious of the danger howling round;  
And but for signs, inexplicably strange,  
Unconscious of the crisis in their lives.  
God at the wheel, we ride the main secure,  
E'en though the pilot sleeps. And had the storm,  
Which swept Genesareth that tossing night,  
"Lord, save us, or we perish!" woke the Lord,  
Delayed its wrath, till tongues of Whitsun-fire  
Had forged anew their weak and world-wise hearts,  
The fishermen assured had scouted fear,  
And placid slept beside their weary Chief.  
'Twas thus these slipped beyond the open sea,  
Where God came down and fused their creature-love  
To love of Him, whose love is alchemy.  
For seasons five vacations came and went.  
Each period teemed with trivial histories  
Of pranks achieved by youngsters born for mirth,  
Who at their best are savages untamed,  
In durance of exacter training bound;  
Of schemes concocted by the tousled heads



## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Of future legislators for a state,  
The Nemeses of petty cracks and crimes.  
And she amazed his ears with dreadful tales  
Of horrid girls, who spoiled the angel looks  
Indulgent nature gave, by flashing hate  
From eyes God meant for pearls of dewy love;  
Who vainly striving to demolish quite  
With jealous anger's twisted glance of scorn  
Some luckier rival, scored their maiden brows  
With furrows, wrinkled age alone should work.

One incident stood out among the rest:  
A simple deed, and yet with memories rife,  
And ringing echoes of the buried past,  
As sweet as moisten orphaned mother's cheeks.  
Such echoes in the pilgrim, bowed with years,  
And wandered back to where his youth lies dead,  
The swaying vines of grape or berry growth,  
Along the lazy banks of idle brook,  
Evoke, and half persuade him cast aside  
His stick, to barefoot walk the pebbly bed,  
And feel the coolness rushing as of yore;  
Or clamber up the tumbling clumps of clay,  
To chase the noisy wren through alder reeds.  
For once, when out a-Maying in the woods,  
The boys came sudden on an acre hedged,  
With crosses rudely carved on rows of mounds,

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

The sleeping places of what holy priests  
Had generations of their earlier selves  
Instructed unto justice, and had died.  
Obedient to that impulse of the heart,  
Which pushes vision past the bounds of sense,  
And prays good rest for souls, sojourning still  
Apart from God, though His by ties secure,  
They doffed their caps, and kneeling on the turf,  
Breathed "Aves," that effaced these dead men's  
debts,

Then went their way. Alexis lingered still.  
For in a corner, where the spears of grass  
Were matted thick, and highest in the light,  
He spied some traces of a snow-white stone.  
The veil of green pushed back, he saw amazed  
An angel seated near a willow tree,  
With folded wings, as though he parted here  
With some fond love, and rested 'gainst fatigue,  
Perpetual guardian of the mold beneath.  
Four lines of chiselled letters told the tale,  
"A Southron's son, who, when the air was chill,  
And all the meadows missed reminders of  
His boyhood home, had sickened of the mists,  
And journeyed on to where 'tis always spring."  
No vaunted pedigree, no date of birth,  
Nought save the simple declaration that  
He had for sire a hero, and released

*Alexis and Mercedes*

From bondage was one Christmas Eve agone.  
But could that angel wake, with tongue of fire  
He'd burn the history of a mother's grief  
Into the soul of any listener,  
And fury with a thousand scourges arm,  
To whip to doom the wretch who seared two hearts,  
Who pillaged life as though 'twere paltry wealth.  
Alexis felt in presence of a friend,  
And longed to cut acquaintance with the quick,  
If so he might commune with kindlier dead.  
The tears fell fast and warm, till nearer shouts  
Of mates, returning with the shadows home,  
His reveries broke. With stealth he dried his eyes,  
And went, his heart with one big secret full.  
With studied effort to conceal his mind,  
He duly questioned teachers, hoar and old,  
It seemed, as frosted moss on college walls,  
And serving-men, who made this Muses' seat  
Their home for ages. All to purpose none.  
The teachers' lives were bounded by their books,  
And each year's cares annihilated whole  
Remembrance of precedent haps.  
The serving-men were strangely blind and dumb  
To new events, and counting close of schools  
A universal death, took little note  
Of such as left the ranks while work was hot.  
Tradition whispered hints, too vague and dim

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

To win belief, of how a stranger once  
Had called, to put the fair-haired boy to school,  
With sundry charges, bearing on his health;  
But brusquely cut interrogations short,  
Remarking that he would within a month  
Indite a note, and settle every doubt.  
When taking leave, the man insistent prayed  
That no expense be spared to nurse the bloom,  
Fast fading from his cheeks, and fit his mind  
For higher things the future had in store.  
As earnest of good will, he left a sum,  
More than sufficient present needs to meet.  
Then bade a cold farewell, and out of doors,  
He never after darkened, strode away.  
The note, however, came. The priest in charge  
Full satisfied, its message filed in tome,  
That registered transactions of the sort.  
But here the story silent fell. The page,  
That could unfold a mystery, was lost,  
Or stowed away in musty garret-hole,  
A meal for worms and mice irreverent.  
When last the boy had died, tradition ran,  
The marble column, with its epitaph  
And weeping angel, from the stranger came,  
Requesting that it mark the exile's grave.  
Thus far Alexis pierced the uncertain haze,  
Enveloping the mound within the grove.

*Alexis and Mercedes*

He cut away the weeds about its sides,  
And nursed the grass to nature's softest hue.  
And yearly, when the day of funeral wreaths,  
His parent South to mourning dedicates,  
Rolled round, he went a pilgrim to the shrine.  
There, on a fragrant heap of wildwood flowers  
Laid lovingly his people's battle flag,  
Nor ever closed the rite without a prayer  
For souls surprised by death when far from home.  
It liked him well to linger on this theme,  
When in the mellow evenings, head to head,  
They talked the hours away. Did he not know  
That chords responsive breathed to every sigh  
Pity evoked within his tender breast?  
Did he not know that somewhere in the North,  
Alive or dead, alive she always hoped,  
A brother to the maiden at his side  
Was swallowed up by fate dark as the tomb?  
Her fingers chose and pieced the remnant silk  
That waited breezes at the head and foot  
Of their dead hero's tomb. She named with care  
What flowers of the meadow best became  
His hillock bed. And yet nor she nor he  
Adverted to the fear that it might chance  
The author of what puzzled most their minds  
Had been that bearded demon from the North,  
Who swaggered past at head of straggler thieves,

*Alexis and Mercedes*

On booty more than manly battle bent;  
And mixing greed with sacred valor's cause,  
And war with pillage, tore from out her arms  
A mother's son, and went his way to shame.  
Surmises, otherwise too strong to down,  
Fall weak, when grappling with the shadow hope,  
That what we hate to know is still undone.  
A woman, weeping at her first born's bier,  
Still hopes 'gainst hope the soul's not gone, but sleeps.

This topic never lost its charm; and yet,  
The sentiment of tender youth full blown  
And blossoming to graver womanhood  
And man's estate, more serious thought pushed in,  
And crowded hard sweet pity's lighter mood.  
Till after graduation, when the wreaths  
That crowned their student years, with honor run,  
Lay dying on the chapel altar step,  
Their minds reverted oft to truths rehearsed  
By saintly priest of God, who Moses-like  
Had seen His face in prayer's burning bush,  
And from the mountain brought a message down  
To children groping for a word from Heaven.  
It was a college custom ages old  
To dedicate the last full week in June  
To sober, quiet, meditative calm.  
The senior scholars ever made this goal,



## *Alexis and Mercedes*

For which they yearned when younger night and day,  
The starting point in what would prove a race  
More trying and more rich in ripe results.  
The guides, who watched them through apprenticeship,  
The deeper to impress the maxims taught,  
Secured the experience of holy eld  
To drive their lessons home; to speed their sons  
This solemn last farewell; to help them fix  
Their wildered gaze, and steady look a while  
Upon the wreck-strewn verge of life's wild sea.  
So smooth his speech, her ears the frequent sob  
Of earnestness begot, so much rejoiced,  
Mercedes silent mused, and heard her friend  
Unnoticed hours impersonate the priest.  
At diverse times, as fitful memory bade,  
Alexis sweet this solemn topic touched,  
And glowed with all the fervor of a saint,  
Who seals his days and nights to talk with God.  
Mercedes listened diligent. But once,  
Resuming all, he singled out the truth  
That took complete possession of his soul,  
And steady shone when all the rest fell dim.  
He phrased his text in simple Latin speech,  
And styled it, "*Tantum Quantum*," magic words  
The reverend preacher bade his hearers keep  
For rule to square their future conduct by.

“To know, to serve, and happy be for aye”  
He called foundation of the edifice;  
His “*Tantum Quantum*” was the corner-stone,  
To which the builder must full oft revert,  
As slow the growing fabric shape assumes.  
“To gather tribute from inferior worlds,  
And heap their wealth about the feet of God,”  
Is service; but some creatures, baffling man,  
Refuse the homage he would have them pay,  
And sore against his will make mutiny.  
An angel face at times stirs other thoughts  
Than beauty of divine artificer,  
And steals away whole hours from golden prayer.  
Sometimes a wealth of money breeds disdain  
For Him, who meant the gift t’engender love;  
And learning sometimes so degrades a mind  
It knows no more of God than servant brutes.  
Unthinking herds of base-born slaves plunge in,  
And, setting store by what appeals to sense,  
With loss neglect to sharp discriminate  
Economy of use and abstinence.  
With self for gospel and interpreter,  
Their hopes sweep lower planes from crib to grave,  
Nor ever mount to healthful sky beyond.  
They come to rate the hermit’s holocaust  
Of joys, that would-be suicides content  
With mingled pain, stark madness run amuck ;



## *Alexis and Mercedes*

'Gainst reason's sense they spurn the hostile truth,  
"Love's essence hides in stubborn sacrifice,  
And friendship moves for war with greedy self."  
But sons, instinct with faith, are holier wise;  
And, much as nature quarrels with the wrongs  
Done flesh (if flesh has right to better use),  
Survey the universe of things, and choose.  
Some creatures, with an aspect all perverse,  
Are gauds to lure unwary souls from God.  
They smell of brimstone, and their touch is death.  
These have a purpose, and their purpose is  
To teach the harder task of abstinence.  
Others again by turn or help or hurt;  
To-day they lend the struggling pilgrim wings,  
To-morrow drag him down with leaden weight.  
And so, by dint of opportunity,  
The sober use them when they're mooded right,  
And hold aloof when that they threaten harm.  
Still others bear so deeply graved in front  
The seal of God, their love entails no loss,  
But rather helps to swell the Maker's praise.  
Good gifts like these the pious use with thanks,  
And yet stand ready, when the summons comes,  
To break from objects dear to them as life,  
And snap the bands that kept their hearts in place.  
Alexis, thus discoursing, shuddered oft  
At distant whispers that he thought he heard.

*Alexis and Mercedes*

And first he laid his fears with seeming doubt.  
But ever nearer drew the voice of God,  
Till last it smote his ears in thunder tones.  
The Master knocked for entrance at a door  
The youth would fain have kept forever barred.  
The other portals of his willing soul  
He opened wide, and strove to lure Him in;  
But Christ in patience waiting stood without,  
And ever said him nay, and ever looked  
With wistful longing for the knob to turn.  
Wisdom cannot deny itself, and sure  
Some cogent reason prompts each will of Heaven.  
We cannot measure motives infinite;  
Enough for us to know that God has spoke.  
And so, mayhap to test his hero-strength,  
Or save him from disaster hid in time,  
God bade Alexis bind and kill the hopes  
That rimmed the hours ahead with golden love.  
She conscious watched the strife within his thoughts,  
And courage prayed to help grace win the day.  
Both knew their honeyed dreams unmixed with sin,  
Both felt assurance of no danger nigh,  
Both hated separation worse than death;  
And yet, because they rated even love,  
As pure as angel unto angel gives,  
A thing designed for higher purposes  
Than empty satisfaction of the heart,

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

They bowed their heads to seeming harsh decree;  
They sealed their gift to Him who made it sweet,  
And gifts made God flow back with interest.

'Twas late in summer, when the starry lights  
Along the marge of Heaven seem nearer earth,  
So clear the air, their signal beams so bright.  
The night was speeding fast, and side by side  
These journeyed on in silence 'neath the trees,  
When, as the moon pushed past a sailing cloud,  
They paused, and hand in hand each looked at each,  
And mutual watched the brimming tears arise.  
Then buoyant sad, with Faith close at their heels,  
Into the open field they stepped and stood,  
Clothed with the mellow light, that leaps about  
Some sculptured saint in niched cathedral dome,  
When all the lamps save one are quenched and dark.  
Their feet were in the buttercups, that still  
Adorned the stem, from which long years ago  
He plucked the gold to toy with at her chin.  
Instinctively they knelt, and with two stars  
For tapers right and left of summer moon,  
The moon itself reminder of the Host,  
Emblazoned in the sky, they said their vows.  
They plighted troth with God, to live for Him;  
For His sweet sake to swift surrender joys  
They once in spirit tasted; to retain

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Nought save their memory, till, this exile done,  
They met where love's the principle of life,  
Where nights and morns are holidays of love,  
Where love eternal marks the flight of time.  
Fearful of rapine in the holocaust,  
He quickly wrung her hand, and headlong walked  
That night recesses of the wilderness,  
To lonely spot beside a singing spring,  
Where he had weeks before a clearing made,  
Had reared a hermit's dwelling, and laid by  
Store of provisions 'gainst the winter months.  
With these and game, that wind and weather drove  
To deeper cover of the trackless woods,  
He life sustained, till spring woke from the ground.  
Then rows of garden seed were duly set,  
To ripen ere the summer came and went.  
And so, for ten slow years he knew not man;  
But closer strove to daily get to God.  
By turns he toiled, and prayed, and sang the hymns  
He sang in chapel when a boy at school.  
Mercedes stood a moment, till his form  
Grew indistinct against the netted boles.  
Then, stronger with the strength example lends,  
Pressed homeward, on the morrow all intent.  
No pillow kept her weary head that night;  
But, with a tender parent's hand for help,  
She ready made to journey to the hill

## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Where first she learned how sweet a thing it is  
To lead a dying life for love of God.  
The mother from some stray remarks had guessed  
A year beforehand all the daughter's mind,  
And time had robbed her early pain of edge.  
Two hurried days of travel to the North  
Mercedes Sisson to the convent brought.  
The oaken doors rolled back, the pious nuns  
Her advent made a holiday of cheer.  
With sombre gown, and beads, and crucifix,  
Full soon she radiant moved from task to task,  
And felt the blitheness of her youth return.  
Alexis seldom crossed her mind, and then  
His image came to tip some holy thought.  
When that she sat the centre of a troop  
Of noisy children, grouped for sport and play,  
Or from her class-room throne looked down upon  
Mock-sober curls, apparent bent on books,  
She ever prayed kind Heaven to keep their hearts,  
And begged their Father send them happier hours,  
Or, if He meant to lead them thorny ways,  
To give them grace to wait as waited she.  
Her sisters noted proud the eager pace  
At which she mounted virtue's steep ascent;  
And laggards, gray in service, oft drew shame  
From hero-efforts of the novice-maid.  
In time they made her abbess, and 'tis said

*Alexis and Mercedes*

Her rule was wondrous kind; so mild withal  
It minded subject nuns of Nazareth,  
Where man gave orders, and a God obeyed.  
She wrought her household unto lives of faith,  
More by example than by soulless words;  
And ever counted kind entreaty speech  
More gently potent than rough-ribbed reproof.  
She held herself appoint to lighten loads  
That God in season never fails to send;  
Nor e'er usurped His vast prerogative,  
To harass hearts, whose woes she could not know.  
With her, position was a sacred trust,  
But then fulfilled, when used to faster run,  
And distance others in the race for good;  
Its only privilege, more time for prayer.  
And so, when night had settled calm upon  
Some busy day, and all her daughters slept,  
The abbess oft with book and candle climbed  
To belfry window, where she paid to God  
The hours distraction from His service stole.  
This window, built into the tower's east,  
Looked full upon the graveyard-mounds to right,  
Where once Alexis vigil kept and prayed.  
The weeds he cut away had sprung again,  
To hide the stone, the chiselled story veil.  
In vain, when midnight closed her lengthened prayers,  
She frequent sat an hour beneath the moon



*Alexis and Mercedes*

That flooded all the fields around with day,  
And strove to read what always fled her eyes.  
Till once some merry villagers below,  
Returning with the morn from city rout,  
Pointed their fingers at the belfry light,  
Which leaped awhile, then in the darkness died.  
A hush fell on the convent halls next day.  
Demure the girls discoursed in whisper tones,  
And walked more quiet, not to wake the dead.  
The sisters wept what tears bedew the cheeks  
Of new-made orphans, and disconsolate,  
Sought in remembrance of their mother saint  
Comfort for loss. They found her cold in death.  
Her book lay open, and her head was bowed;  
But agony had not bedimmed the smile  
That played about the corners of her lips;  
The evening of her life had been so like  
The summer day that spends itself in tears,  
To melt near sunset into silver blue.  
For, as the sleeping air awoke at sound  
Of minster clock, proclaiming half the night,  
She saw the grave far off in glory clouds,  
And all the ground about lay smooth with grass.  
Upon the mound two angel faces shone,  
And drank in rapture from each other's eyes.  
These only paused to wave a welcome hand,  
And when they looked her way, she recognized



## *Alexis and Mercedes*

Alexis and the boy she knew for kin.  
Deep in the tangled growth of world-old oaks,  
Beside the spring, that hour Alexis sat,  
To muse on all that had been in the past,  
To praise the love that hedged his heart with grace.  
For grace's ways much of their mystery lose  
To souls, that meditate apart from man,  
Creation's greatest glory and its shame.  
That day was consecrate to hymns of thanks,  
It rounded out the singer's thirtieth year;  
And, when in distant cities midnight pealed,  
His head lay tired upon his hands and knees,  
And life was ebbing. Sudden past him swept  
The hallowed sight Mercedes dying saw,  
Her candle in its socket burning low.  
Convulsively he made as if to move,  
But energy was gone with tenant soul.  
The shadows round fell silent, save for cries  
Of whippoorwill, that made the night air ring  
With courage songs to her too timid young.  
Two pilgrims entered into rest eterne,  
And at the open gate expectant stood  
A herald, sent to bid them welcome home.  
And so these three passed up to where God sits,  
The central sun of love that lives in death,  
A brother, sister, and a friend to both;  
A Southron's son, a bridegroom, and his bride.

# The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius

## A RETREAT IN VERSE

Like one inspired, the preacher rolled his eyes  
The sinful world across, in spirit called  
The wheeling multitude of men to halt,  
And hearing hold for aye the message sent.  
Then swift the message came in thunder tones.  
As who oppressed by legion cannon roar,  
He closed his trembling lids, laid hands aface,  
Then took the burden of his lesson up.

### FIRST WEEK

The soul to life, the sun and soil to flower;  
E'en such the motive to man's every deed.  
The common thief, whose very breath defiles,  
Is more a man than recreant sons of God,  
Who counter run to principles deep set  
And seated solemn in their inmost thoughts.  
Whoever robs by rule, at least, has made  
Ill-gotten wealth the beacon of his hopes.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Brave, though dishonest, on and up he fights  
To where that greasy lanthorn hangs and spits.  
But they, the narrow path illumined white  
With smiles of Father, throned at journey's top,  
And stretching hands that reach from end to end,  
The path close hedged on either side with law,  
Or climb the fence, and travel through the woods;  
Or fools their faces set the other way,  
And tire themselves in chase of shadow ghosts.  
Man's Maker had vast interests at stake,  
When making man sole agent of His praise.  
And conscious of the wavering pendulous,  
Inherent in His creature's weaker will,  
Wisely ordained a sore discomfort smart  
For robbery done His name in baser mood.  
To know, to serve, and happy be for aye;  
To gather tribute from inferior worlds,  
And heap their wealth about the feet of God;  
This is the tune to which man's heart is set.  
This duty done, God's spirit fingers run  
Along the chords, soul music to compound,  
As smooth as beats with echo of His breath.  
But duty spurn aside, to passion yield  
The strings it only thrums to snap to shreds;  
Art falls to noise, and leaden heavy thumps  
Oppress the wretched heart, but ill at ease  
With all creation and its nobler self.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

This earth is sorrow's parent; and this earth  
Bore other sons, till sin rose on the winds  
And blasted all its face. Accumulate  
The ills of pestilence, of famine, war,  
Whatever ghosts of evil stalk across  
Black-bordered page of human history;  
The pile will tower steady to the sky,  
Without, however, piercing through the clouds.  
But sin, where sorrow never entered in,  
Essayed awhile to dwell, and even knocked  
At Eden's inner gate. For angels sinned!  
The pile will steady rise; but bow your back,  
And dig away the dirt about its base;  
The fabric's last support is primal sin  
Wedge thick and close about with recent crime.  
Nay, more; that pestilence, which made some towns  
Foul charnel houses in the long ago,  
Its narrow circuit walked mayhap a year,  
Then in the desert met a lonesome end.  
But death, since sin first let him loose upon  
Defenceless worlds of men, can never die;  
And each day's scattered victims form a state  
As populous as petty kings oppress;  
A harvest rich as when historic plagues  
Made havoc in a land, death reaps to-day.  
This very hour the neighbor at my side  
He steadfast looks upon. To-morrow morn

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

We'll meet death in the street; and he and we  
Shall jostle 'gainst some fellow singled out  
To walk dark ways with him to-morrow night.  
Hunger abroad with sickness hand in hand  
So tight has drawn the skin on throbbing brow,  
The brain within betrayed its solemn trust;  
And famine herded to the market-place  
Mad droves of human beasts, who, spectre-like,  
Sat waiting for the death king's phantom ship,  
To ride them to forgetfulness and gloom.  
Yea, more than once, against all law of kind,  
Did woman steep her hands and wet her lips  
In the red current of a tender life,  
To suckle which she should have pricked her heart.  
This sin's a cunning executioner;  
And lest the wretch it piecemeal slays escape  
An ounce of all his heavy weight of pain,  
It sleepless dances in his troubled dreams,  
And leaves unwelcome thought. It whets the sense  
To quiver neath the fang of fell remorse,  
From reason's cradle to the grave of age.  
Its lash can whip the parent to do things  
A woman's son must blush to even name.  
Who has not seen a mother's greed for pelf,  
Or for society's ambiguous smile,  
A daughter deck for sacrificial feast,  
Whose ghoulish priest's a demon hot from hell?

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Why, war is nature's sickle sent afield  
To cut away superfluous growth of men,  
And mercifully keep a tainted race  
From dwindling to rude cannibals or worse.  
Now roar the guns; to-morrow's bugle blast  
Summons the combatants to stack their arms.  
The dead are buried, and the live march home  
To watch their children and their children's sons  
Enjoy what years of peace their travail wrought.  
The clouds of battle smoke, now rolling dun  
The other side of earth, nor load our air  
With powder smell, nor midday sun obscure.  
But sin involves a universe in gloom.  
Wherever souls exist, the rays of love,  
God meant to stream in floating radiance down,  
Are darkened quite, or duller than the beams  
Of morn-smit moon. No more the golden days,  
When man and Maker walked as friend and friend,  
And sin lay hidden in the womb of time.  
Sin's hosts are stout and strong. In them defeat  
Arouses latent strength for new assaults.  
They send no herald with the flag of truce,  
But hack and slash till God war's finish cries.  
Their fury ceases not with victim's death;  
But on the verge of the dead craven's grave  
A thousand demons grin, and with the clay  
Spades toss upon the coffin-lid, leap down



*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

To carry off the prize to farthest hell,  
And, deep within their prison house of fire,  
Torment him long as God's unending wrath  
Blows hot upon the heads of rebel sons.

SECOND WEEK

Then, who will lead a world into the fray?  
We are not cowards all. We need a King  
To marshal us together, bind us tight,  
And prop our weakness with the godlike strength  
That oneness of design alone begets.  
We need a cause, round which to rally men,  
However mean, with still an instinct left  
For what is true and good; with courage still  
To grapple death along the path to fame.  
We need a captain of some sterner mould  
Than puny beings of a day can boast.  
We are but men, and half our nature claims  
Dull kinship with the heavy clay we tread.  
Our foes are angels, who stand next to God  
In graded scale of things that move and live.  
No mixture of a baser element  
Mars the perfection of their spirit thews,  
And solid worlds of matter offer them  
No more resistance than an idle breeze.  
We're groundling doubters, and we woo despair.  
So well acquaint with loss our little lives



## *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

That faith, to hold our ears, must whisper hopes  
Not long deferred, or back her pledges strong  
With bonded promise of eternal truth.  
But, lo! we have a Captain and a cause.  
We muster ranks about Omnipotence.  
The handle of the flag, whose waving folds  
Enshadow us, is wet with drops of blood  
That reddened once no less a heart than God's.  
And mark it well! God sent no vicar down;  
But came in lowly garb to lead His hosts.  
So much He dreaded coward man's unfaith,  
He moved His court to earth, His splendor veiled,  
And dealt in person with the knights He chose.  
We turn time back, in spirit climb across  
The crumbled pillars of two thousand years.  
We touch the dust-stained hem of one who walked  
The by-ways of Judea, seeking hearts  
Full willing to take up the weary march.  
We hear the steady tramp of war astir;  
For men are moving to the vale below.  
Their Leader's words are music to their thoughts,  
And God has sworn that victory shall crown  
The hero brows embarked in this campaign;  
That death, like the avenging angel sent  
The sons of Egypt to exterminate,  
Shall reverence his Master's seal of love,  
And pass them by untouched. Some night they'll sleep,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

To wake and find that peace is dawned at last.  
Their foes will fancy death has worked its will.  
But vain their thoughts! For long as glory's king  
Shall sit enthroned, these, crimson with their blood,  
Shall file in triumph past their Captain's tent  
With palm in hand and songs upon their lips.  
Descend we then to plain where temple spires  
And prayerful quiet of Jerusalem  
Are mirrored summer evenings by the sun,  
When shadows steal across the city walls,  
And, joining forces in the field below,  
Involve one side of earth in gloom of night.  
Jerusalem, God's citadel of peace,  
Smiles down a welcome to these men of Christ,  
The footsore soldiers of a footsore King.  
And Christ Himself, the man whose face is fair  
With all the beauty resident in God,  
Is whispering through the line His plan of war.  
To subjugate the nations to His sway,  
To teach mankind that riches, honors, pride,  
Are poison parents of death dealing sin;  
To be the workmen who rebuild a world,  
And raise His kingdom on the ruins of hearts;  
To chase to farthest hell the rebel host  
Which now beneath the noise of Babylon  
Is mustering for the fray. The smoke and fire,  
That lap their chieftain in a horrid maze,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

But half portray the fierceness of his hates,  
The mad confusion reigning in his schemes,  
The vapory foundations of his rule.  
Dread Satan sits enthroned, and hot for war,  
By terror rules his crew of cringing slaves,  
Too weak to quarrel with his empty wrath,  
And ready to his will because embarked  
In kindred struggle with a common foe.  
Commingled and compact in serried ranks,  
Held fast together by their purpose fell,  
Whether from earth or hell, his helpers stand  
Awaiting orders from their beetling chief.  
These demons red with mercy's kindled fire,  
These men of sin, in all but nature imps,  
And distant but the hour of life from woe,  
Are bidden trespass wide, on harm intent,  
And crowd pain's prison tight with captive wrong.  
Their prey the senseless sons of folly's dupes,  
Dull Adam, duller Eve. Whatever lures,  
Whatever methods time effective proved,  
Are theirs by favor of their robber lord;  
To dazzle hungry eyes with glint of gold,  
To poison minds with venom scraped from crowns,  
And bury fetid hearts in pleasure's tomb.  
Their greed for wealth appeased, ambition's whip  
Must scourge their toiling backs to honor's height.  
Interment follows, when, their forces spent,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

They shuffle dumb, like stricken beasts afield,  
Into the open grave of lust and shame.  
Our Captain Christ is seated on no throne.  
He walks the pliant grass, with flowers besprent,  
His pathway redolent with sainthood's charms;  
For virtue rests the eye, and smells more sweet  
Than odors trapped in vales of Araby.  
No bluster marks His speech. He summons round  
The poor, the humble, sorrow's servitors,  
Lean hermits, virgins, martyrs red with wounds.  
His army counts whatever hero lived  
To make his fellows proud of their estate,  
And died to lighten cowards of despair.  
Men blindly grope their devious way towards truth,  
And cry a teacher who unerring knows,  
Nor ever risks conjecture. Courage fails  
Endeavor, when defeat is single wage.  
So well acquaint with loss our little lives,  
We need a Leader, who can hold us tight  
To duty in disaster's killing air,  
With force of His example's bracing strength.  
Our weakness needs addition from on high.  
No vigor that a body's might conceals  
Can dare a spirit to the field and win.  
And Christ is Leader, Model; Christ invests  
Our faintness with omnipotence's might  
In shape of purchased sacramental grace,

## *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

The miracle that changes mortal men  
To sons of God, and stamps them part divine.  
A wisdom more than human crowds the page  
Of gospel narrative, and Christ our King  
Is hero of the golden story writ.  
Our aim is lofty, our ideals high.  
With God for inspiration and for pledge,  
We pitch our purpose to the very stars,  
Ambitioning the holiness of God.  
For sainthood is divinity revealed,  
And since what hallowed time the Father's Son,  
Assuming flesh, with virtue walked the earth,  
Men's eyes are open to the splendid sight.  
Intoxicate with His example's wine,  
They clamor still to heights beyond earth's ken.  
Christ walks ahead, His servants follow on  
From Bethlehem to the gory hill of skulls,  
Where death relieves His shoulders of their load.  
The wind that whistled through the shepherds' cave  
That cheerless Christmas night, and struck God chill,  
Can harden tender bodies to the pain  
It costs to win salvation; and the rags  
That bound His royal limbs are witness mute  
That men, to merit His approving smile,  
Must gird themselves with nakedness and want.  
The lesson of detachment written large  
Across the mystery of the boy-God lost,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

And found again within the temple walls,  
Must urge domestic men shake off the thrall  
That ties them to the fireside and its joys,  
And stout apostles walk the weary waste  
Of friendless duty, with the sky for roof  
And heartless strangers for their next of kin.  
One only love with right usurps our dreams,  
And God is centre of our fonder thoughts.  
All other loves, as contraband of war,  
Encounter best employment in neglect.  
They shorten power for good, and Samsons shear  
To bury them in shame's ignoble grave.  
Obedience borrows glamor from the years  
At Nazareth. Their seeming idle peace  
Is tribute to the worth of solitude,  
When all its golden hours encourage growth  
In wisdom, age, and grace with God and men.  
Through all the story of His hero life  
One lesson runs. We cannot keep His ranks  
Unless we make fair holiness our own,  
And wear its whiteness to the battle's end.  
His soldiers must be saints. No other good  
Of talent, prowess, beauty, can atone  
For single want of sterling virtue's seal.  
We must be born anew; and sacrifice  
Is cruel parent to this second birth.  
And ready we must ply the rending knife,



## *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Our heart the victim to be cut in twain.  
Delay is fatal. When the dread decree  
Smites coward sense a-tremble with dismay,  
Despatch is half the fight, and waiting whets  
The sharpness of attack, to dull our edge.  
When folly prompts some silly subterfuge,  
We must be speedy. Else we murder hope,  
And die of indecision, like the man,  
Who, sick of fever, prayed for quick relief,  
And with the neighbor breath rejected cure,  
Because the medicine angered haughty taste.

### THIRD WEEK

And now in slow procession towards the mount,  
Where virtue bled to make us sinners whole,  
Where God bowed to the death-blow meant for men,  
We pick our way past beasts our Captain slew;  
And under cover of His pity's shield  
Escape the darts aimed at us from the hedge.  
Or if stray missiles prick us with their smart,  
The wound heals up, and never steals a life.  
Nay, more; to dull the pain of trivial hurts,  
We sometimes reckon past endurance harsh,  
Christ walks the street with mocking shouters choked;  
Nor shuts His ears to shrieks of ribald tongues,  
His lifted hand could have with palsy smote;  
Nor drops His lids on hell-fed mob's grimace,



## *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Fashioned by sons whose love He yearning craves.  
He naked takes the lash plied hard and thick,  
And barefoot treads the way with sorrows paved.  
And when He climbed the gibbet of the Cross  
Some braver friends hugged close its gory foot;  
But none were called to mount with Him its height.  
Too thick the shadows in that lofty air  
For unassisted man to breathe and live.  
No martyr dies but that a spirit choir  
Descends to soothe with music's balm his pains,  
And worlds applaud his courage to the skies.  
But Calvary's griefs assuagement none allowed.  
For timid Peter watched them from afar;  
The Father sent no comfort angel down,  
And seemed to turn His eyes to other wheres.  
E'en so, whatever ills oppress us hard  
In building of the kingdom, Christ is near,  
To bear the brunt, and let us easily off.  
Whatever joys He has, to parcel round,  
Abundant flow into our straitened hearts.  
That Easter morn He dazzled Mary's eyes  
With splendor issuing from His gory wounds,  
Was but a prelude to the days and nights  
He spent in converse with more timid friends.  
He was not ready yet to home return,  
Till doubting Thomas satisfied his doubts,  
And tasted comfort he so ill deserved.

## *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

And when He rose beyond the servant clouds,  
By miracle, that left small room for fear,  
As loath to overtax their too weak faith,  
He earthward sent a herald from His court  
To rouse their sleeping sense and give them heart.  
The artist skilled in measured sound and song,  
His wizard hand to crowning effort set,  
For prelude to the piece he earnest means  
To captive take the world of listening ears  
And hold attention to the end of time,  
Tears from the tingling fibre of his soul  
Successive sweeps of music brief and tense,  
Instinct with passion's grandeur, and the sum  
Of sequent breaths in wild profusion blent.  
Redemption's song is God's own masterpiece;  
The Eucharist, its prelude, smooth and stern.  
Sublimar than creation, it combines  
Man's sweetest joy, his Maker's sharpest woe;  
It sates a Father's burning wish to dwell  
Anear the children of His blood and tears,  
And puts renewal of the traitor's kiss  
In easy reach of spendthrift prodigals,  
That love divine may still on sorrow feed.  
This dogma to the limit vexes minds.  
God on our altars is beyond the ken  
Of mortal vision, faith's profoundest truth,  
Where seeming wheat is changed by miracle

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

To living flesh, and what was purple wine  
Becomes the crimson blood of God made man;  
Where elements, that nourish life we know,  
Give place to principles that fatten thews  
Of spirit beings in the realms of grace.  
This wine of virgins, bread of God's elect,  
Lend substance to our hope. In process still  
Of promise Christ held speech that sure implies  
A blessed resurrection for such souls  
As, docile to His wishes, drink and eat.  
To be the vicar of a friend in death,  
To die to purchase life for him we love,  
Is friendship's crowning effort. Language fails  
To character devotion of the sort  
That after mortal torments reassumes,  
From motives of affection, second life,  
To die unceasing, mystically slain.  
And so this sacred meal is virtue's sum,  
The test of loyal faith, hope's flawless bond,  
Securest pledge of love that mutual reigns  
Between men's Maker and His servant sons.  
Small wonder then that seated at the feast,  
This night of wonders, heralding the cross,  
The Master lifted from His inmost heart  
The sigh attendant on accomplishment.  
Desiring He desires to eat this Pasch  
With His disciples, since it tolls the hour

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

For morning Masses to the end of time,  
And opens wide for death's exultant King  
The gateway to Redemption's road of grief.  
Nobility is service; and to stamp  
Th' unwelcome truth on laggard minds  
Of pupils in His school, He plays the slave,  
And girt with towel washes clean their feet.  
Saint Peter meets the lesson with a vaunt  
Of boastful pride; and Judas, dead to grace,  
Instead of shouting out with penance pain,  
And winning pardon by acknowledgment,  
Hugs treason tighter in his reddening thoughts.  
The awesome mystery done, God leads the man  
In Christ to garden sown with funeral trees,  
And through the gaping pores bares to the night  
The leaping current of His troubled blood.  
The shimmering light of March's colder moon  
And winter's distant stars in snowy sky  
Lend gruesome color to the killing scene.  
Savage abandonment with viselike grip  
Takes murderous hold to crush Him towards despair.  
With prayer for single weapon of defence,  
He fights disaster off, and courage plucks  
From stout submission to the Father's will  
To victory win. The chalice passes not,  
But angel hands support it to His lips;  
And honey hope, like drop of medicine dew,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Slips to its depths, to sweeten all the dregs.  
Again our giant rises from the dust,  
Exulting still to run His course towards death.  
False friendship, like a robber masked and dark,  
Starts sudden in His pathway. All the light  
Falls from His eyes, when Judas with a kiss,  
With what the ages reckon seal and sum  
Of ripened love, betrays his Master, Christ,  
To hounds unleashed from hatred's lowest hell.  
The Lamb to slaughter marches meek and dumb.  
One priest of demons plies the scourge of scorn,  
To pass his victim to another's ire.  
One alley ruffian smites with knotted fist;  
Another viler voids his fouler mouth  
Upon the face that mirrors Paradise.  
Last, Rome in judgment sits, and Pilate calls  
To trial the culprit for a people's sins.  
His verdict stands towards pardon, but the fears  
Ambition conjures frighten Pilate more  
Than conscience; and the monstrous deed is done.  
The spiteful crown of thorns, the scarlet rag,  
The reed that pounded all His head with pain,  
Are grim reminders of the night of woe  
The Saviour sleepless watched in Jewry's jail.  
His scourging at the pillar stands for time  
A monument to blazon unto men  
The gory wage just God exacts from crime.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Our gentle Jesus of the Sacred Heart,  
His body tender as the Mother Maid,  
Who nursed against this night of butchery  
His boyhood years, is hemmed around with wolves.  
His flesh, the temple of divinity,  
Enlivened by a soul that never thought  
Offence or harm, responsively alive  
To every jarring shock, runs red with blood  
Beneath the swinging rods plied fast and thick;  
And all the pavement mirrors murder back.  
Alone, forsaken, He is teacher still,  
And all the lesser virtues, touch of kin  
Enhances in our dealings man with man,  
An added lustre borrow from the scene.  
The word in season and the welcome smile,  
That keeps a hunted brother from despair,  
Assume the mantle of sublimity  
When studied in connection with our Christ.  
To take the stranger's part, to brace his arm,  
Is stealing to the pillar's side to bid  
The heart of God be brave. To Golgotha  
We speedy passage make. Small need to count  
The stones He reddened as He bleeding went;  
Each streak a saving mark to cancel sin,  
A kneeling angel guards each ruddy drop,  
That more than ransoms worlds of captive men.  
The triple fall but whets the soldiers' wrath,



*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

And sorrow is eclipsed when Son and Mother meet  
To speak their silent love in helpless grief.  
The image grateful God on napkin spread,  
Come down the ages, preaches pity's worth.  
The women, bidden save their tears for woes  
To follow fast, their eyes the drier weep.  
Pain's triumph nears an end. A city climbs  
The holy mount, and all the air is still.  
The light uneasy grows, the hollow earth  
Makes ready to unloose its buried dead.  
Our man of sorrows, Christ, Redemption's King,  
His throne a cross, a round of cruel thorns  
His crown, is raised aloft and pendent hangs  
To lift creation to His open side.  
And muffled bells within the dreamy past  
Are tolling a dead era to the tomb.  
The hands upon the face of time turn back,  
The night is over, hope can breathe again.  
The race is run, and this the winner's wreath,  
The God of life is dead that men may live.  
Sin's shackles from our feet are rived apart,  
We muster ranks with legion-sons redeemed.  
And oh, the power within our puny hands!  
When all is said, our fate rests with ourselves.  
Despite the cross, despite the nails of love,  
That tied the Saviour to His bed of pain,  
We can, if minded wrong, past that and these,



*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Impatient of restraint, walk straight to hell.  
Before we leave our station on the hill,  
With Whitsun-fire for candle to our thoughts,  
We busy gather lessons. Hatred deep  
As ocean's floor stirs in the student soul  
With contemplation of the monster, crime.  
Sin slaughtered God, and sinners at this hour  
Upon our street renew the tragedy.  
Surpassing large the Master's goodness looms  
On the horizon topped with distant cross.  
Creation proves God's kindness to a friend  
Who, naked still of titles to His love,  
At least deserved no hate. Redemption means  
To lavish favors on rebellious slaves  
That planned their owner's death. Hope borrows  
health  
Immortal from the Father's wild desire  
To save a dying race. In rescue work  
He drained of moisture all the veins of Christ;  
To raise us to the sky He cannot halt  
At lesser sacrifice. When we reflect  
That zeal was single motive of the cross,  
And gnaws His Sacred Heart as thirst the throat,  
New ardor settles on our work for souls.  
Rehearse in sorrow all the story's woe,  
Examples start at every bend and turn;  
No nook or corner but a virtue hides,

And Christ is preaching in the solemn still.  
The olive garden and its rending prayer,  
The traitor's kiss, the pillar running blood,  
The tearing crown, the reed, the tiny cry  
Proclaiming finish in a minor key;  
Each incident can harden us to grief,  
Can chase the coward from our timid bones,  
Enabling us to walk red duty's mile,  
And close a hidden life of seeming loss,  
Reputed thieves and consecrate to shame.

FOURTH WEEK

As who in trackless desert meets a beast  
With rolling eyes and dripping jaws of blood,  
Beats swift retreat, and pauses not till, safe  
Within the shelter of a friendly camp,  
He gathers breath and strains his patient ears  
To catch the echo of pursuant roar;  
So rest we after our encounter grim  
With sin, the havoc-wolf that through the years  
Our errant souls with frequent death essayed  
To menace, and in savage fashion slew  
The lamb of God, men's hostage and their price.  
And Easter is our refuge. All its joys  
Are spread, to recompense the grievous hours  
We spent in self-enquiry's sombre wood.  
Its sunshine, tempered by spring's softest air,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Lends artist nature wizardry to sow  
The flaming field with colors that reflect  
Sky-meadows, where the stars are daisy-heads  
And clouds are heather-bloom. Its open gate  
Inviting welcome waves to pilgrims, tired  
Of harsh withal, though holy journey sped.  
And peace is burden of its every breath;  
God's handiwork, the peace surpassing thought,  
Where, all the warring passions still, hearts slip  
Unthinking past the killing strife with sin  
To calm of union such as angels know.  
We walk another way, and mingle glad  
With triumph's army of exultant souls,  
Forward to shout Hosannas to their King.  
In these surroundings care has no excuse,  
And joy is single tenant of the heart.  
The sun's Creator rises with the morn,  
And while the servant star floods hill and vale  
With life, in semblance of creative light,  
Its Lord and Master quickens deader men  
To springing hope, renascent from the tomb.  
And ever since that holy hour of dawn  
With gladness saw death's conqueror arise,  
And shake funereal wrappings from His limbs,  
To pierce with splendor adamant rock,  
As beams ethereal cleave opposing glass,  
We sons of sorrow vigil keep the night

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Preceding Easter, and expectant wait  
To see the fire dance in the flaming East,  
And taste the sweetness of contentment's smile  
In unison with resurrection's light.  
Thus girded for the marvels soon to break  
Upon our startled vision, lo, we follow dumb  
The way with wonders scattered. First we speed  
From burial garden to the prison house,  
Where all the virtue, saved from primal age,  
Awaits the mercy word to pass the gates,  
And mount the singing sky to glory's seats  
It bought with wounds. The patriarchs and kings,  
The prophets, captains, and stout fighting men,  
Who walked with justice and for Israel died,  
Aware of finish to the weary years,  
By God appointed, strain their ears and eyes,  
All greedy for the golden bars to melt  
At sound of shout proclaiming sweet release.  
In spirit ranks they crowd the Saviour's side,  
And to the music choiring angels sing  
Make solemn entry to the upper air.  
Then rapid as the wings of thunder's light,  
Keep steady pace with Christ to humble roof,  
Where Mary deep'in prayer awaits her son.  
They do obeisance to their crownéd Queen,  
And spell the rapture in her mother-eyes  
That sate their thirst with floods of joyous tears,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Provoked by memory of the bitter past,  
Commingle with fruition's sweeter wage.  
This filial function done, in eager flight  
The Saviour hurries whither pity calls.  
For Magdalen, the conquest of His love,  
Is keeping vigil at His empty tomb.  
A prey to thoughts conflictive, she resolves  
To yield her broken life, if need arise,  
Where last the Master's form her vision crossed.  
Distracted, torn, she parleys with the guard,  
Told from the triumph-throng to watch and wait,  
These mute reminders of the stubborn truth,  
To wait is costlier service than to work.  
Giant absorption signals giant love,  
And Magdalen is docile to the spell.  
Her heart is not divided, Christ is all.  
These angels streaming radiance dazzle not  
Her steadfast eyes on one sole object fixed.  
Without emotion or regret she leaves  
Their splendid presence, to enquiry make  
Of seeming farmer in the garb of toil.  
And workmen in the vineyard harvest weeds,  
When aught save souls immortal is their quest;  
And teachers in the Kingdom hirelings are,  
Unless they tutor with impartial care  
Their boorish lads and angel boys alike.  
"Mary," "Rabboni," tear the veil aside,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

And mutual recognition crowns the word.  
Our follies are no everlasting bar  
To union with the God they sorely hurt.  
This woman, plucked from shame's abysmal depths,  
By pity her heroic love provoked,  
In Christ's unerring friendship second sits  
To Virgin Mother, never touched by sin.  
Repentance made ambassador to men,  
Who wield the mystic key to glory's gates,  
His ears by distant cry for succor smote,  
Our Shepherd hastes to save the doubting two  
Who tired of dull delay and quarrelled quick  
With hope's slow process of accomplishment.  
These hold the open road to Emmaus,  
Their tottering faith intent on rest at home,  
Where, freed from terrors of a dismal week,  
It may in quiet mend its hurts, and live.  
Away from mutual prayer's attendant might,  
From stouter help example lends, away,  
These hardly guess at what a headlong pace  
They journey towards disaster's yawning chasm.  
They loosen fetters round their straitened hearts  
With aid of converse. And their talk is right.  
It bears on Christ, with solemn sad discourse  
Of execution week. And God draws near,  
To keep the promise with His children passed,  
Where two are gathered with His name for tie,



*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

He walks their midst. While sorrow veils their eyes  
To person of the guest they entertain,  
Their wiser hearts are sensible to God  
And know unusual warmth. In pilgrim garb  
He plies the teacher's trade, and, step by step,  
These pupils, slow with folly, renders fit  
To grapple tight religion's crowning truth,  
Beatitude is guerdon still to pain.  
Their faith on surer basis set, their hope  
From disappointment's killing pressure freed,  
The Master tests the measure of their love  
By sundry hints of faring far ahead,  
And braving hidden perils of the night.  
Their charity rings true, and straight bespeaks  
A shelter for the seeming stranger's head,  
"Stay with us, sir; the day is nearly done,  
The shadows tall approaching dark announce."  
And captive to men's kindness, God obeys.  
The humble meal is spread; and, lo, this home  
Of Cleophas a sacred temple grows.  
The high priest girds Himself for sacrifice,  
The victim of Redemption's slain anew,  
To be His people's mystic food and drink;  
The Mass of mystery down the ages starts  
Its mercy-errand, scattering wide and far  
What penetrating light enables hearts  
To recognize their God when bread is broke.



*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

And now we reverent progress make to Galilee,  
For meeting angels promised at the tomb.  
Our Shepherd comforts first what loyal sheep  
Stand steadfast through temptation's whirling storm,  
And next He rescues from impending death  
What fainter hearts contemplate grim despair.  
His flock is folded, and His thoughtful care  
Reverts to distant time, when, labor o'er,  
He rides the climbing clouds to topmost Heaven,  
And leaves a Vicar, wielding equal power,  
And like prerogative to teach and rule;  
A man as other men, of flesh and blood,  
To whom his fellows can in time of stress  
Appeal for guidance, while their absent king  
Obtrudes His presence in our Church's laws.  
To test this Vicar's fitness, He ordains  
A solemn conclave called beside the sea,  
Where Peter stands inspection and proves true.  
For witness to the function, rich in wide  
And dread results, He summons other six,  
Whose word holds credit with the court of time.  
These count two rivals, Thomas slow of faith,  
A noisy sceptic of colossal doubt,  
And him the Christ proclaimed withouten guile.  
At Peter's bidding, for his wish is law,  
They sail the heavy night, and search the depths  
Of storied sea for its elusive spoils;

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Their spirits broken and their limbs fatigued,  
They hail with morning light the Master's form;  
With booty load the creaking vessel's hold;  
Partake with wonder of the frugal meal  
His bounty spread, and lend attentive ear  
To solemn interview that follows fast.  
The post of honor in His rising Church  
A humble mind, a heart on fire demands.  
No more the boastful Peter, wiser grown,  
His prowess vaunts. As Simon, son of John,  
He spells confusion in his origin,  
And rests his title on the single word,  
"Thou knowest that I love." The test is done.  
Christ's Vicar kneels, supremest king on earth,  
While God commissions him with sacred power,  
And wets his head with unction of command.  
His care, the older sheep, the younger lambs;  
His subjects, bishops, priests, and people are.  
His kingdom knows no bounds of time or place,  
And hell's assailing might shall beat in vain  
Its adamantine gates. Stout Peter's word  
As bond secures his coronation oath,  
And whispered prophecy the veil, that hides  
Fulfilment, moves aside. Events shall prove  
What virtue lay in Whitsun tongues of fire.  
Heroic years shall win him martyr's crown;  
The servant, share his Master's cross in death.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

We get but glimpses of what glory hours  
The risen Saviour scattered as He went  
From single friend to friend and wondering group.  
These forty days in closest converse spent  
With sons He hated still to orphans leave,  
Knew rapture that the saints and angels know,  
And teemed with earnest talk and sage advice.  
He set His kingdom on foundations strong,  
To weather tempests that the ages hid;  
He left His children rules to guide them right  
Past dangers fatal to unaided minds;  
And counselled practices that peopled since  
His second Kingdom with the world's elect.  
Tradition reaches down the stretch of years  
To make us paupers rich with lessons wise,  
He taught the favored few these busy days.  
Where pain is dead, emotions strange akin  
To jealousy assert annoying sway,  
And angels envy men God's longer stay;  
A vacant throne makes clamor for its king,  
And prayers descend, to urge His swift return.  
His mission filled, no need to tarry more,  
And mountain top, last imprint of His feet  
Made sacred ground, looms large within His thoughts.  
The hour appointed come, He leads the way,  
With love's attendant suite in solemn train;  
And farewells said, He soars aloft on wings,

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

Almighty strength to human body fits.  
The cross of blessing that His lifted hand  
Then traced upon the air, to eyes of faith  
Still blazes trailing pathway to the sky,  
And heartens cowards fighting towards the right,  
As once its neighbor sign flashed victory  
To Constantine. With lighter cloud for car,  
He journeys past the spaces planets walk,  
Till distance overcomes desiring eyes,  
And body vision yields to spirit sight.  
The wonder that our fathers in the faith  
Beheld with rapture this Ascension Day  
Is ours to witness morning, night, and noon.  
Each day's horizon and the starry heights,  
If we but listen to our answering hearts,  
Are sweet reminders of the triumph throng  
That kept the Master's side from earth to Heaven,  
And entered glory's home with glory's King.  
When sorrow threatens, we must climb on high,  
Give pause to labor, lift our weary heads,  
And dashing back the tears that ready rise,  
See joys a Father fashions for His sons.  
The tawdry earth a sordid bauble seems,  
Its pleasures wear to weariness or worse,  
When, breasting wings that meditation lends,  
We pilfer golden hours of idle ease  
From busy care, to rest us at God's feet.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

For God is beauty, love is beauty's thrall;  
And men are captive to its tyrant charm.  
Our hearts, transplanted to the realms of bliss,  
In truth experience no essential change;  
And beauty infinite exerts a spell,  
If we but knew, as potent here as there.  
Because of vision face to face, the saints  
In Eden's inner temple live of love,  
And hate is left to perish at the gate.  
The radiance streaming from rewarding eyes  
Bars every pathway to escape from love;  
And like a despot queen, love rules with might,  
Where beauty as a king usurps full sway.  
In exile here, our vulgar eyes are held;  
We cannot see as see God's closer friends,  
And blindness to the glory rampant there  
Is measure of our baneful freedom here  
To hate or love. To shake this curse of kind,  
And slip to bondage the elect enjoy,  
We must the God of splendor closer view,  
And from creation's book of wonders pluck  
A larger notion of His attributes.  
In spite of primal scars that seam its face,  
This earth bears title to admiring praise,  
Betraying touches of the artist hand  
That paved its floor with flowers of every hue,  
And hanging gardens in its ceiling set.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

The sunrise, and the sunset, and the clouds;  
The seasons four, the breath of softer spring,  
The golden summer, winter's silver cold,  
And red ripe autumn, are but voices meant  
To lift devouter minds to thought of God.  
Whatever thing of beauty earth can boast,  
From Venus Phidias wrought in Parian Stone,  
To mother-love and father-sacrifice,  
From childhood's innocence to peace of age,  
Is but a spark that borrows fire and light  
From beauty's central sun, the God of all.  
Effects have previous being in their cause,  
Created excellences owe their birth  
To God's creative might, and nought exists  
Without its type in God's capacious mind.  
And hence it follows that the single good,  
Embracing all, and able of itself  
To fill the human heart and leave desire  
Without a want, is God, and God alone.  
What folly then to cleave to lesser things,  
To feed voracious hearts with crumbs of good,  
When loaves of plenty are within our reach!  
And every sin we do is folly such.  
We never tie our loves to painted gauds  
That passion offers, but we damn them straight  
To gruesome process of starvation's death.  
And so the circle runs its golden round.

*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

What makes our future home the seat of bliss  
Alone can crowd our exile with delight.  
And God's absorbing presence, barriers broke,  
Must leap the intervening air, and speed  
Athwart the haze of earth what vision light  
Enslaves to joy the hearts of saints in Heaven.



# Atheism, Heresy and Faith

## INTRODUCTION

### I

Good friends, if God walked through our street,  
Each home a daily visit paid,  
To heal the heart-hurts sorrow made,  
With oil and wine of converse sweet;  
If in the garb of pilgrim meek,  
From door to door He made His way,  
To cure the sick, all pain allay,  
And dry the tears on each child's cheek;  
Nay, more; if myriad spirit bands,  
And saints about the light white seat  
Bore earthward down on pinions fleet,  
For diverse towns in diverse lands;  
If angels toiled afield with men  
To clear wet brows of midday glow;  
If angels watched our women sew,  
And helped the young to play; what then?  
Why, things would wear another mien,  
And Death would prove too weak a thing  
To carry captive to their King,  
Men's souls enamoured of the scene.

II

We've built us ships to cross the seas,  
We've space annihilated quite;  
If life were worth so stout a fight,  
Who knows but what we'd kill disease?  
Disease is not omnipotent;  
Our weakness is, perhaps, its strength.  
What whittles down our years in length?  
Disgust with years already spent.  
Men cursed with carcasses like ours,  
On history's initial page,  
At age we call a green old age,  
Are rated infants yet in hours.  
Our ways in pleasant places cast,  
We'd rummage lands and find, in sooth,  
The fountain of perpetual youth;  
Or failing, tie up Death so fast,  
His scythe from out his hands would slip;  
We'd drag him to earth's summit top  
And pitilessly let him drop  
Through gloom, whose depths to Nowhere dip.  
And Death would be no more! Ah, yes!  
But can you estimate the loss?  
What spectres of fatigue would cross  
Our lengthened shadows, can you guess?

## *Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

I would not have old Death to die!  
Small harm befall his snowy locks!  
I love him as the friend who knocks,  
To bid me forth to eternity.

### III

If God as pilgrim walked the streets,  
If angels helped make merry din;  
Our highways still would reek with sin,  
Men's souls would melt with passion's heats.  
Red Calvary whispers Deicide;  
The Jews who had more faith than we  
Nailed Christ upon the gibbet-tree;  
And God lay dead, when Jesus died.  
Methinks the traitor Judas recks  
Some sons among the sons of men;  
More Pharisees live now than then,  
With harder hearts and stiffer necks.

### IV

Besides, our eyes were never meant  
For joyance in this grosser air;  
Beatitude, estranged from care,  
Alone can make our souls content.

When flawless Beauty's flawless parts  
Their image on our vision fling;  
When death has cut in twain the string  
That straitens now our love-sick hearts;  
When glory's miracle has wrought  
These orbs of flesh to spirit-orbs;  
When Deity unveiled absorbs  
Man's big capacity for thought;  
Then is the season foreordained,  
For payment of deferréd wage;  
Then Christ shall crown the brow of age  
With diadem hope's patience gained.

ATHEISM

V

We're in the shadow land of strife,  
Awaiting for the mists to lift  
And mingle with the azure drift  
That borders t'other side of life.  
Faith knows not; she can but believe;  
Belief's the badge of weaker years;  
And reason's courage falls to tears  
When meshed in webs it can't unweave.

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Because it savors sweet to pride,  
Some fools of men hug theories,  
As swift begetting sharp unease,  
As when the third of Heaven lied.  
They cannot shoot the darts of thought  
Beyond the bounds their Maker set;  
They lay about, they worry, fret,  
And last deny that God is aught.  
And if some whispered doubt ascend  
(God's love is stronger than unfaith)  
They stifle dead the angel wraith,  
And into deeper hells descend.

VI

How hot a curse lights on the head,  
To age-old creed adopt too proud!  
Disdaining what he terms the crowd,  
He hobnobs with the beasts husk-fed.  
Impatient under check and rule,  
He breaks the bonds that render wise;  
He wakes some morning, rubs his eyes,  
And counts himself an arrant fool.  
He left the path right reason goes,  
In search of wisdom, something worth;  
The laughing-stock of error's mirth,  
For all his pains now nothing knows.

## *Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

His life is one colossal doubt;  
He feeds his mind forbidden food,  
And humors every baser mood  
To shut the spectral future out.  
Abroad he shifts to hide the gloom  
That tracks him to his study lone;  
The arch-fiend always helps his own  
Until they shuffle to the tomb.

### VII

Sin seasons fuel for furnace hell,  
The fires God's anger feeds burn brisk;  
This craven doubter braves the risk  
And travels—whitherward? Ah, well;  
Were pains eternal what they seem  
To prophets of these latter days,  
Uncertain something hid in haze,  
With which their wild vagaries teem;  
The odds at stake should rein them in—  
Men betting money on a race,  
Their wagers with more prudence place,  
Than such as doubt of hell—and sin!  
And God's own mind cannot conceive  
A crime of darkly deeper brew  
Than deed these blatant scoffers do  
When boasting that they'll not believe.

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

VIII

But an they must, why, let them die!  
Our warning's but a feeble voice;  
They've made irrevocable choice,  
And where the tree falls, let it lie!  
Grace wasted on them all her arts,  
Saints wore their very knees in prayer;  
Nor you nor I can hope or dare  
To rival grace subduing hearts.  
Nor you nor I can seal our prayers  
With record of a life clean kept;  
The tears for unbelievers wept  
Outweigh a world of souls like theirs.  
And yet omnipotent of will,  
These rend a Heart already broke;—  
God spoke,—the sleeping dead awoke;  
God thunders, and these slumber still.  
Our message word is Heaven sent:  
This way lies life, that way lies death;  
The Lord can stifle all your breath,  
He can't close hell, towards which you're bent.

IX

We purpose not to measure swords  
With hypocrite bereft of sense,  
Who dares to mock omnipotence;  
His ribald blasphemy affords



*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

An hour or two of demon play  
    To easy dupes, who line his purse  
    With greasy shekels, sit and curse  
The night through, with hell's coryphée.  
The owl that mopes when moons are new  
    Beneath the sun falls wholly blind;  
    When man whips God from out his mind  
Truth dons a mask of inky hue.  
The mole is cozier in the dark;  
    Then let him burrow to his taste  
    And batten on earth's refuse waste;  
And let his fellows rind and bark  
Of wormwood pleasure grind and gnaw;  
    Their future lot they know full well;  
    God never yet sent fools to hell,  
And God can sanction all His law.

x

It likes me not as well as you  
    To cut the throat of meaner self.  
    Think you that saints, while scorning pelf,  
Knew not what wonders gold can do?  
And youths and maids, who sealed and vowed  
    The rare possession of their hearts,  
    Once nurtured honey-sweetened smarts  
Too subtle for your brutish crowd.

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Why prate you of the hallowed ties,  
Stout heroes snapped for God, and wept?  
Alas! the soul your crib who kept,  
Was but a monster in disguise.  
The babe that ne'er heard Jesus sung,  
Or heard Him sung in sceptic tone,  
No higher love, methinks, has known  
Than beasts afield lend to their young.  
Such babes are vipers, destined yet  
To propagate a fouller brood,  
And cram with venom's poisoned food  
The precious progeny they get;  
To suck from Fury potion fell,  
To after sting the wretch to death,  
Who nursing breathed unfaith for breath,  
And elbow her for room in hell.  
What know your crew of virtue's smile?  
What know they of the purest good,  
Inherent in true motherhood?  
Their very lips the word defile.

XI

But such, ah well! as heard the call  
That can no rival love abide,  
And past the strength of nature tried  
To make a holocaust of all;

## *Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Of home and childhood's patron saint,  
Of all the innocent young hopes  
That clustered starlike up the slopes  
To centre Heaven, where hope fell faint;  
Such know, in sooth, the pang it cost,  
These instincts virgin-pure to spurn;  
To altars wreck, and overturn  
What idols in their pathway crossed.  
Such heroes haggle not with Him,  
Who Heaven left, their souls to save;  
Who wrung His Heart, their hearts to lave,  
And clear the image sin made dim.

### XII

Ye mother saints, who sit and count  
The battle buffets of a son;  
Who number proud the crowns he won,  
From watch-towers on the holy mount;  
Tell ye these sentimental liars,  
What sweets from sorrow-blossoms spring;  
Tell them what memories hang and cling  
To wraiths of unfulfilled desires,  
When God in Heaven says them nay,  
And grace, disrobing them of harm,  
Bedecks them with a borrowed charm,  
And works her will some hidden way.

## *Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Tell them the worth of hero-pain,  
When wet with blood drops from the cross,  
When once the seed of seeming loss  
Is grown to everlasting gain.  
The learning of the schools exhaust,  
Still sacrifice to love is life;  
When God as high-priest plies the knife,  
Man's heart is fittest holocaust.

### HERESY

#### XIII

I know not whom God hates more deep,  
These wholesale murderers of truth,  
Whose lying tongues and cruel ruth  
Nerve moral suicides to leap  
Down steepes that dip to tireless fire,  
The pride of rebel spirits lit;  
Or coward heretics, who sit  
And whittle faith to smirched desire;  
Who graze along the narrow edge  
'Twixt field of good and field of ill;  
With cockle-sin their bellies fill,  
And for excuse God's word allege.

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Such triflers fit well with the thought,  
Wise Solomon a mystery clips,  
“The bawd who eats, and wipes her lips,  
And says, what evil have I wrought?”

XIV

I can be patient with the son  
Who trips and falls, but with regret;  
Who wounds a mother's heart, and yet  
Bewails the evil he has done.  
I pity sinners, such by force  
Of tempter's iron-studded thong,  
Who still acknowledge all the wrong,  
And weep their stipend of remorse.  
Their hands are foul, their hearts are right,  
They crawled behind no hideous lie;  
They're men enough at least to try,  
And failing, scorn to God indict.  
Though weak, they know what sinews hide  
With mercy in man's meed of grace;  
They recollect that face to face  
With hell, the odds are on their side.

XV

But cravens of a meaner kind,  
Too selfish fond of things attain't,

## *Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Yet fearful of their unrestraint,  
Fall to and prostitute their mind.  
Pretending still to find excuse  
For deeds that tinge the cheek with shame,  
They impudently lay the blame  
To gifts designed for holier use.  
Man's zest for things by conscience banned,  
They reckon meant to license sin;  
They preach that reining passion in,  
Frustrates an end our Maker planned.  
But saints, whose views were sealed with sign,  
More sure than any these can boast,  
Stout battle did with passion's host,  
And fought their way to peace's shrine.  
Saints held and hold each impulse lent  
For holy purpose; some, designed  
To test the mettle of man's mind,  
And trampled, shorten banishment.

### XVI

Who hate the toil of self-control,  
Implied in liberty of will,  
To keep the dogs of conscience still,  
These brutify the human soul;

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

Complacent fold their scarlet hands,  
And heavenward roll their rheumy eyes,  
To thank the god, pound-penny wise,  
Who freedom tied with iron bands;  
Then bade his slaves work out their fate,  
And choose where choice is out of reach,  
Predestining beforehand each  
To everlasting love or hate.

XVII

Nay, more: to emphasize belief  
In idleness of honest work,  
A text or two with quip and quirk  
They cite, to prove some villain thief  
As pure within as are the just,  
Who lead a life not of the earth;  
Reducing all man's moral worth  
To a vague something misnamed trust;  
A faith or hope, whate'er it be,  
Supplanting all the maxims taught  
By Him, whose blood our birthright bought,  
Whose language unmistakably  
Marks off for men the golden rules  
That can alone procure them rest.  
This knowledge locked within their breast,  
With all the hardihood of fools



*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

These prophets cut a primrose path  
To left of Christ's encrimsoned mile;  
Such leaders make the demons smile,  
And furnish fuel to God's just wrath.

XVIII

With art of pettifogging seers  
They handle what is sacredest;  
They conjure artificial rest,  
A-piping tunes to maudlin ears.  
Despair's unfounded confidence  
Is creature of their coward fear;  
They half believe, and what is queer,  
That half is comforting to sense.  
Superior pity's dole of sighs  
They proffer to misguided zeal  
In monks, who thought the spirit's weal  
Lay in the body's sacrifice.  
They vote the Baptist's coat of skin  
Delusion and a thankless care;  
The hermit's meagreness of fare  
They count a madman's horrid sin.  
They piece the texts that pamper ease;  
What texts run counter to their sloth  
They thrust aside, or nothing loath,  
Read into Scripture what they please.

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

No higher court exerts control  
O'er whims that cross each little mind;  
God's message to the weak and blind  
Shifts with the four winds of the soul.  
Their hopes, their fears, their love, their hate,  
Interpret truth eternal —Bah!  
Let thieves interpret common law,  
How long will justice rule the State?

XIX

Why, here at home, where all are kings,  
Where suffrage parcels out the crowns,  
We are not grown as yet the clowns,  
To think that each must manage things.  
We have a code, and in disputes  
We seek the court of last resort,  
Whose judgment cuts all quarrels short,  
Irrevocably settling suits.  
There's one tribunal in the land  
Whose word no interference brooks;  
Think you the nation's statute-books  
More difficult to understand  
Than sacred page, where light but blinds  
With mysteries baffling heart and head?  
Or think you God to truth that dead,  
He set no guide for finite minds?

With honest heart and open eyes  
Think you that contraries are true?  
This, truth for me; and that, for you;  
That Truth Himself to some tells lies?

XX

I have no quarrel with the flocks  
These hireling shepherds lull to sleep;  
And God has coals enough to heap  
On teachers, who are stumbling blocks.  
One word of counsel, ere we part:  
Man's mind is sure, his will's at fault;  
When doubts assail you, call a halt;  
And, good my friends, look to your heart!  
God soon or late will stand and knock;  
He visits them that earnest seek;  
And when His breath is on your cheek,  
The doorway of your heart unlock.  
He'll set you 'mong the chosen few,  
The Church He styles His one true fold,  
The Church as is our era old,  
The only Church Saint Peter knew.  
'Twill cost you pain; be stout and brave;  
Wounds won for Christ are honored scars!  
Christ came to kindle such like wars  
Where men risk all, their souls to save.

Our other friends we love, to lose;  
They live their little day, and die;  
Christ loves throughout eternity;  
Or one or other, we must choose!

FAITH

XXI

God's hero saints are poor and banned,  
Rags are insignia of their rank;  
They taste the sorrow Jesus drank,  
And walk rough ways; but hold His hand!  
And one sweet joy they never miss,  
The inward whisper of His voice,  
Who comforts them, and seals their choice  
With foretaste of unending bliss;  
A calm that settles on the mind,  
With all the angry passions still;  
The calm that stole across the hill,  
Nigh Bethlehem on the dying wind.  
And each recurrent Christmas night  
Brings echoes of the peaceful song  
To hearts bowed down by heavy wrong,  
And battling hopeful for the right.

XXII

O holiest night in all the year!  
O night of dreams supremely sweet!  
O night when Peace and Justice meet  
To kiss away the brimming tear,  
Each sees in t'other's melting eye,  
Each tasted all the long weeks through,  
While war his brazen trumpet blew  
And red Injustice watched men die!  
O night when Peace and Justice part  
To walk again estrangéd ways,  
The day dawn of a round of days,  
That knife with woe man's aching heart!  
Memorial of that frosty night,  
When spirit choirs on Jewry's steep  
Awoke the shepherd boys from sleep  
And flooded all the land with light!  
When angel-thought found human tongue,  
And earth-bound sense cut loose from earth;  
Immortals shared creation's mirth,  
And mortals heard the songs they sung!

XXIII

Since singers last from Heaven high  
Aroused the drowsy flocks afield,  
Long lines of raven years have wheeled  
Their flight across our leaden sky.

And with the years, mayhap, there went  
The innocence and candor true,  
That seraph minstrels earthward drew  
To comfort men in banishment.  
The rounded thing, on which we crawl,  
Apart from God pursues its way;  
Encrusted thick with sin to-day,  
Methinks, I feel it lower fall.  
The age when crime submerged a world,  
So clean beside our own appears,  
That Pity's self could hold her tears  
Were all our race to chaos hurled.

XXIV

And yet, in spite of all the harm  
We've done, and still, alas! shall do,  
This very hour, to false hearts true,  
Christ lives, our tepid love to warm.  
The stars keep eager watch to-night,  
Expectant sure of mystery;  
Of big event full soon to be;  
My eyes are wet, and threads of light,  
Web fashioned locking strand with strand,  
From Heaven's corners weave and fling  
Ray pathways for the Infant King  
To all the altars in our land.

XXV

The surging air is loud with noise,  
Of bells a-ringing tidings sweet;  
And through the snow upon the street  
Go singing girls and singing boys,  
The maids and pages of the Child  
About to visit sons of men;  
These welcome Christ to earth again  
With voices sin has not defiled.  
I hearken to their liquid hymn,  
In spirit join the vassal throng  
That to the church these lead along;  
With penance-joy my sight falls dim.  
Oh, would that all the world were young!  
Or would that age knew less of wrong!  
Oh, would our hearts held one lone song,  
The song that Christmas Eve heard sung!  
The one thought in its every breath  
Was peace with God, and peace with man;  
And peace through all its lifetime ran,  
And peace stood at its side in death.

XXVI

I seek the door which closes in  
What chosen souls His grace engirds,  
Apart from fiends that reel in herds  
The night time through to lairs of sin.



*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

The silent hush within the walls,  
Of youth and age in prayer profound,  
Bespeaks the still that hovers round  
The vestibule to glory's halls.  
And farther off, beyond the rows  
Of low-bent heads, another sight!  
A snow-white altar, banked with light,  
Effulgence through the temple throws.

XXVII

The Mass begins! A gray-haired priest,  
His soul a-tremble on his tongue,  
Gives echo wing the aisles among;  
And sweet-faced boys, ere echo's ceased,  
Take up the strain, and make night ring  
With sounds the Blesséd sit to hear,  
Eternity's unending year,  
Beneath the smile of glory's King.  
"We cannot see," he falters out,  
"The good things waiting them that love;  
We cannot see the ground above;  
But, God, we can't Thy mercies doubt!"  
"Then lift us past the things we see,  
Through raptures of this Christmas Eve;  
That last our restless hearts may cleave  
To loves that now our efforts flee!"

*Atheism, Heresy and Faith*

“And ’gainst the dawn of that glad day,  
When faith to vision yields her place,  
And we shall see Thee face to face,  
Come down and cheer us on our way!”  
“A hundred weary pilgrims kneel  
To watch their Saviour born anew;  
Thy word is passed, we know it true;  
Then come and all Thy promise seal!”

XXVIII

He whispers to the rounded wheat,  
The Christ is in his saintly hands;  
Descending seraphs range in bands  
For adoration at God’s feet!  
A-tinkling rings the tiny bell,  
The people fall to prayer more deep;  
The Shepherd walks among His sheep,  
Earth’s nigher Heaven, and all goes well!  
O God! we thank Thee for the grace  
That circles round each Christmas night;  
We pray Thee, send a fuller light,  
To kill unfaith from out our race.

# The Bells of the Temple

SILVER JUBILEE OF WOODSTOCK COLLEGE,  
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And beneath at the feet of the same tunic round about, thou shalt make as it were pomegranates, of violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, with little bells set between;

So that there shall be a golden bell and a pomegranate, and again another golden bell and a pomegranate.

And Aaron shall be vested with it in the office of his ministry that the sound may be heard, when he goeth in and cometh out of the sanctuary.—Exodus, xxviii, 33-35.

## I

Since sound and sight in ear and eye  
Are fabric of man's mind-spun thought,  
Jehovah philosophic wrought,  
When thus He cloaked His majesty:  
A bearded priest, with sweet-faced boys,  
His tunic hemmed about with bells;  
A tinkling, golden clink that tells  
The heart God passes in the noise.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

A heaving dome of incense clouds,  
Through which uncertain glimmer floats;  
The lights of myriad taper boats  
With haze of awe in all their shrouds.  
God dwells not in the whirling wind,  
Nor rides the wing of wild alarm;  
He steals in with the subtle charm  
That permeates a quiet mind.  
With all five gateways of the soul  
Close shut against what things of sense  
Or breathe Him not, or breathe offence,  
With loves and hates in tight control,  
Our sorrows unto gladness cease:  
Like laughing maid in Love's employ,  
Sweet recollection smiles to joy,  
And all goes well; for God is peace.

### II

Somewhere in Fancy's inner room  
A jeweled casket, pinned and locked,  
Keeps sacred whispers, that have mocked  
Time's bloodless touch, or slipped the tomb.  
Some evening Memory turns the key;  
Old age sits down to echoes hear,  
That grate unwelcome on the ear,  
Or flood the soul with melody:

## *The Bells of the Temple*

The jar of speech conceived in ire,  
The curse some weaker victim sent  
To dog his heels with worriment,  
And heap his head with hell-hot fire;  
The dirge a weeping angel tolled,  
When Jesus, travel stained and sore,  
Knocked for admission at his door,  
To die without in wet and cold;  
The sobbing thanks an orphan wove,  
Whose scalding tears his pity dried  
That night she walked the streets, and cried,  
And with her first big sorrow strove;  
The plea for succor, faint and thin,  
When stirred by moans of God below,  
From dreams he hated to forego,  
Descending down he let Him in.

### III

Each people has one common heart,  
Which all the nation's glory thrills,  
On which the nation's heavy ills  
Inflict a universal smart.  
In sobbing Israel's history  
No page with blacker lines is crossed,  
Than page recounting how she lost  
The priest and bells of mystery.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

She opes the tome, and spells the rhyme  
    To which the golden tongues made song;  
She wails things hid amid the throng  
Of spectre-sounds in silent time.  
Her grief unheartens all her men;  
    'Tis hopeless sad. For God is passed,  
    His pathway is with curses cast;  
The bells—they must not ring again!  
So one beside the morning sea,  
    Ere dawn can lift the mist-wrack dun,  
    Peers 'cross the waste for sailor son,  
Who is not, and shall never be.

### IV

But we who sit, this day of days,  
    To piece each music-laden breath,  
    Which up from alley-ways of death,  
That is no death, unto us strays,  
Can hear the bells, and see the priests;  
    Can almost touch the tuneful rims  
    Of tunics, sweeping hints of hymns  
Down aisles of temple decked for feasts.  
Faith knows no past, and things of faith  
    More real are than day-time dreams;  
    My picture is not what it seems,  
An empty fancy's hollow wraith.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

The garb of flesh they wore when men,  
In graveyard yon to dust is worn.  
What boots it? Are their spirits shorn  
Of character, that marked them then?  
We knew them then by no such sign  
As brands the friendship of an hour;  
Love lent their holy mien its power,  
Death fused that love to love divine.

### v

I follow, as they quiet walked  
Along the hallway, down the stair;  
Fresh from the altar ringed with prayer,  
Where face to face with God they talked.  
I see each busy in his cell,  
To smooth, with mercy's dole of ruth,  
The hillocks 'long the road to truth,  
Where prouder talent tripped and fell.  
I watch them mending broken hope,  
With praises pushing them to try,  
Who else had straight lain down to die,  
Rather than in the shadows grope.  
These were our heroes of the Cross,  
Who died to self, if so they might  
Teach strangers how to live for right,  
And harvests pluck from barren loss.



## *The Bells of the Temple*

### VI

They're smiling at us through the gloom,  
Their cheery voices hushed in sleep;  
But ringing echoes overleap  
The vaporous chaos of the tomb.  
The bells upon their tunics preach;  
Each golden bell of virtue's gold,  
Cast in the Christ appointed mould,  
Example speaks more loud than speech!  
Old Aaron's priest says not a word;  
The people bend as nearer come  
The tinkling footfalls of the dumb;  
And in man's silence God is heard.  
Fall to your prayers, your heads bow down;  
Do homage, ere the hour is gone,  
To slow procession moving on,  
Yclad in bell-embroidered gown!

### VII

O sad and precious memory!  
The gaps these left no time can fill;  
But somewhere, on the eternal hill,  
They live, and long as God shall be.  
In tents of peace they know not strife  
That racks us still awhile, till death  
Shall on us breathe creative breath,  
And thrill this clay with second life.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

And yet the hand, that whips us thus  
At bidding of a Father moves;  
God chastens where He still approves,  
And God will not abandon us;  
He'll not stand by, and let our hopes  
Slip down to pits of blind despair;  
He cannot make us curse the care  
With which we hugged hope up the slopes.  
For in the distant, dim to be,  
The wee, wee bells are ringing out,  
Gold plashing our horizon doubt,  
With suns we can't expect to see.

### VIII

In city set upon a height,  
The citadel of 'leagured men;  
These wait the noise, from nether glen,  
Of brothers come to fight their fight;  
And rout the flocks of carrion birds  
That wheel and clamor menace-moans,  
To gouge their eyes out, bare their bones,  
Or clap them into slave-whipped herds.  
And one, a watcher in the tower,  
Hoarse halloes down to reeling ghosts,  
That clouds of curling dust hide hosts  
Of helpers, distant but an hour!

## *The Bells of the Temple*

Disdaining danger, up men climb  
To topmost wall's exposéd verge,  
And hear strange whispers upward surge,  
From columns marching swift as Time.  
They rub their eyes, each mad sense whirls,  
For, where the road neath foliage stoops,  
They seem to see advancing troops  
Of singing boys and singing girls.  
And to the music that these weave  
March warriors matched to battle fate;  
With silver buckle, ring, and plate,  
Caparisoned from casque to greave.

### IX

The silent foot of thievish time  
To covert tomb steals our best years;  
Old heads are frosted thick with fears,  
And grave-moss thrives in age's rime.  
The sliding sides of crag we've won  
Empurpled are with life-blood's clot;  
Our coward meannesses forgot,  
God bless the little good we've done!  
We feel too weak to clutch our arms,  
When dead, perhaps our work will die;  
The clouds that crowd our evening sky  
Are fringed with rags of doubt-alarms.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

### X

But no! Far East, with bated breath,  
New suns await the word to spring,  
New rainbows o'er the old to fling,  
And rescue all our hopes from death.  
In thicket dawn of each new day  
Recruits are sallying to the front,  
Impatient for the shock and brunt  
Of wars, that wore our strength away.  
And snatches of their battle-rhymes,  
Enweave themselves into our dreams;  
They tinkle soft, each almost seems  
The harbinger of temple chimes.  
Memorials of what mystic sound  
Engirded Aaron round about,  
When going in and coming out,  
He bowed men's foreheads to the ground;  
Of bearded priest and sweet-faced boys,  
Of tunics hemmed about with bells;  
Of tinkling, golden clink that tells  
The heart God passes with the noise.

### XI

For thy good gifts we thank thee, God;  
For crimes thy grace plucked from our thought,  
Ere worser self dread havoc wrought;  
For seas of sin we crossed dry-shod.

## *The Bells of the Temple*

We thank thee for the days like this,  
That lit at intervals our path;  
These days of sorrow's aftermath,  
When earth and Heaven meet to kiss;  
For whispers from the fields of spring,  
Where sires, who made our infancy  
One endless round of minstrelsy,  
To our drear winter tireless sing;  
For bells, their lives a-welling out,  
In far-off land of hours to be;  
The burden of their madcap glee  
To hope, new life; and death to doubt.  
God, may our spent years' remnant days  
With flowers strew our dead past's dust,  
That seasons hence men may, nay, must,  
In all our deeds thy mercies praise!  
May years of yearning toilsome spent  
Within the shadow of thy cross  
Redeem those days of loitered loss  
Along the ways our fathers went.  
God, wreathe what hours remain of strife  
With thorns from out our dead King's crown;  
That so, when all the woods are brown,  
We pass from death to deathless life!

THE END



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